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ABSTRACT

The focus of this book, "re-vision," derived from concerns expressed in the open meeting of the November 1973 convention of the National Council of Teachers of English by teachers interested in changes in classroom practices which result from reflection on a particular problem and the subsequent search for a solution. Following an opening article by Allen Berger, "Vision and Re-Vision," the book is divided into four sections. "Opening Classrooms and Individualizing Activities" contains 16 articles concerning a variety of approaches to the teaching of the different language arts. "Changing the Medium" includes 7 articles which discuss the uses of audiovisual aids in teaching language arts. In "Reconsidering Writing" 10 articles view various facets of the teaching of composition, and in "Changing Approaches to Literature" 12 articles explore literature instruction. Writers of the articles teach in elementary and secondary schools, colleges, and universities in three provinces and 23 states. (JM)

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Classroom Practices
in Teaching English
1974-1975

RE-VISION

Twelfth Report
of the Committee
on Classroom Practices

Allen Berger and
Blanche Hope Smith,
Cochairmen

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PREFACE

"Re-Vision," the focus of this issue, was the result of concerns expressed in the open meeting of the Committee on Classroom Practices in Teaching English held during the sixty-third annual convention of the National Council of Teachers of English in Philadelphia, November 1973. Teachers attending the open meeting were interested in changes in classroom practices which came about through reflection on a particular problem and through the subsequent search for a solution.

Shortly after the meeting, invitations for manuscripts appeared in issues of *Elementary English*, *English Journal*, *College English*, and in the journals of many NCTE-affiliated organizations. Many journals tangential to the field of English also carried the invitation for manuscripts.

By mid-April, 103 manuscripts arrived from teachers throughout Canada and the United States. These manuscripts were evaluated by Committee members Ouida Clapp, Norman Nathan, Virginia Obrig, Clara Pederson, Samira Rafla Tallboy, and the cochairmen. In addition to the manuscripts selected for publication, the Committee also selected brief statements culled from several others. The writers of these articles and statements teach in elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities in three provinces and twenty-three states.

Since this year ends our three years as cochairmen of the NCTE Committee on Classroom Practices, we wish to thank our Committee members who, through their evaluations and judgments, made immeasurable contributions to these issues of *Classroom Practices*. We also wish to give thanks to the NCTE staff, who saw each volume through to completion in time for each November convention. Finally we express our sincere appreciation to all our writers and readers, and we hope that you enjoy the following pages of RE-VISION, the twelfth issue of *Classroom Practices in Teaching English*.

A.B. and B.H.S.

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VISION AND RE-VISION

Allen Berger

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Last December a ninth grade student named Sheila came to share her views with students and teachers in one of my undergraduate classes. When she was in grade six she had come to exchange ideas with students and teachers in a similar undergraduate class. The questions that people had asked of her when she was eleven years old were asked again when she was fourteen, and the conditions for both conversations were similar, with the exception, of course, of the passage of three years.

During the conversations Sheila expressed her views on reading and writing poetry, book reports and workbooks, spelling and vocabulary, pleasure reading and libraries, student teachers, learning and teaching. From my own viewpoint it seems that reflecting upon the views of a student plays a vital role in focusing and refocusing one's own vision and re-vision. Let me share with you some excerpts from the two conversations with Sheila.

SHEILA: GRADE SIX

Sheila, would you tell us your feelings about poetry?

I like poetry because it's written in so many different ways—you can really put expression into it. If you were writing about snow you can write it and pronounce it very delicately and softly, but if you were writing about a thunder cloud you could put on a very loud and noisy expression. But in stories I've noticed that sometimes they put "'Hello there,' he said fast" or "the person said fast." How would you know he's

I wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the Edmonton, Alberta, Public Schools and to express appreciation to undergraduate students Jennifer Bruce, Donna Mandreck, Bob Papineau, and graduate student Pat Johnson for help in preparing the two half-hour composite videotapes entitled *Sheila Talks about Reading* and *Sheila Talks about Education*. A copy of either videotape may be obtained free of charge for educational purposes by sending a blank half-inch videotape to the Audio-Visual Media Centre, University of Alberta, Education Centre, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

going to say it fast because they put it *afterwards!* I don't see how they expect you to say it fast when they tell you it's fast afterwards. So I like poetry because it's not a story and it's got so many words that you can put expression in and it tells you at the beginning so you don't get half way through the sentence and then realize that you're supposed to be saying it fast.

How did you become interested in poetry?

I was very interested in Japanese things, and I had a grade two teacher who was interested in Japanese things too. I like the Japanese type of writing poetry, I think it's called haiku, and she told me of other types of poetry that were something like it, and gradually I used to look for books on poetry to try to find if they had Japanese poetry in them, but sometimes I'd come across a nice one that wasn't Japanese. This just sort of broadened my interest not only in Japanese poetry.

What kind of stories do you like?

I haven't really got a favorite story. Some adventure stories I read I really don't like and *some* that I read—*they're real good!* I mean I can't really pick a favorite story because, well, the way some authors write them, they can be *yechhh*, and the way some authors write they can be real good.

Sheila, do you like to write stories or make reports?

Well, I have trouble getting ideas. I sat there for a full language period —two language periods—just trying to get an idea; once I got an idea it was fun to write a story. Most of the time I don't like writing stories because I can't really find an idea very well and I don't like picking ideas out of books because I'd know it wasn't my idea, I didn't have anything to do with it. So I like getting an idea of my own and then writing stories; otherwise—no, it's not so easy for me to write a story.

Were you asked by your teacher to make book reports?

Book reports. Well, this year we didn't do book reports. Last year we used to have a contest to see who could have the best book report, and whoever had would win some little prize. I didn't really like that because the kids worked towards a prize and not for the satisfaction of having a good book report. But we do do book reports. We've reviewed book reports and things like this and studied how you set up a book report.

How do you like reading?

Aside from school it isn't that nice because all we do is workbooks. And the stories we read aren't that interesting. Other than that it's pretty nice.

Do you have reading groups? Do the fast readers go together, the average readers go together?

No, we never had that. Maybe if you're so good a reader that's all right, but if there are readers who are better you can learn something

from them. Whereas if you group them you aren't going to see any better readers than yourself—and how are you going to be able to know what you are doing wrong? The teacher tells you, sure, that's fine; but you wouldn't really be able to know on your own, and you couldn't pick up expressions. I think that's how I learned. Kathy used to read fables from a book and stuff like this and I used to pick up the way she expressed some of the things. And that's how I learned, really. When you're reading a book you don't skim through it. It's not just reading—it's all full of expressions!

You said something about workbooks. Can you tell me something more what your teacher does?

Well, I enjoyed our teacher very much because he could liven things up. Like in reading—sometimes we could go outside, and he'd let us draw while he read us a story. Sometimes he asked us things and let us draw pictures about the story afterwards. Once we had a story on Robert Fulton. He told us about it from what he knew, and we got many people's opinions on this. So he did make reading enjoyable, unless it was workbooks.

What is it about workbooks that you don't like, Sheila?

Well, we didn't have any freedom. We weren't really allowed discussions, and you sat there and underlined what was right and what was wrong. There's nothing in between. We just sat there doing exercises. The same thing everyday.

Was it stuff you already knew?

Yes. You know, that's why I liked the discussions, because I learned quite a few things I didn't know. But with the workbooks you just sat there. *Sit down and do this!* Simple, but who would like to sit there all afternoon, *this is right, this is wrong, this is right, this is wrong*, over and over, and that's all? We just tried to find what's right and wrong; *we didn't try to find why or anything.* He didn't seem to understand why we got into an interesting conversation with our neighbors. If he knew, he wasn't going to let us know.

When you do workbook exercises, do you know what you will get out of them?

Sometimes there's a little paragraph at the edge of the page, and I do what it says. If we don't understand, we go back and do it again—and I guess that's learning.

How good are you in spelling, Sheila?

Spelling bees. I have to be dragged up, because I don't like getting in front of everybody, and your whole team says, "Sheila, Sheila, you spell this word! You have to spell this, Sheila!" On a spelling test—that's what I like, because people don't know the mistakes you make—you know

yourself most of the time—but getting in front of people, if you go out on a dumb word, well, that sort of spoils your reputation. I don't like spelling bees at all because you have to wait, and everything depends on whether you can spell that word, and if you can't everybody's moaning, "Sheila, Sheila, how could you! Why did you do this?" and stuff like this. That's a bit ridiculous! It's only a spelling match. But it's hard to think of it that way. . . .

Do spelling bees help you to learn to spell?

I think I'd have to take into consideration the person. For me I don't think it really helps because I used to go out on some simple words. Sometimes I go out on purpose just to have the relief of sitting down and being able to do my art and stuff. For some people it does help them learn. But who wants everybody to know you're a dumb speller? On a spelling test that's good. The teacher doesn't announce the marks. You can brood over it yourself without somebody saying, "Ha, you dumb speller!" But I guess it does help people when they sit down and can go over the spelling book and think of this word that they went out on, but I think that it's just going to get them to dread spelling bees, because everybody knows what a dumb speller they are. I don't know whether it would help them learn; maybe for some people, but for the majority I think they just sort of feel they'll do their best. Don't know how much they learn.

Sheila, do you know what the word "vocabulary" means?

Well, I think your vocabulary consists of all the words you know and use and you know the real meaning of.

I notice you have quite a good vocabulary. Did you work at it? Try to learn new words?

Sometimes when I'm reading something, I like to puzzle my Mom quite a lot. I always love to try and find a word that she doesn't know, and I used to have competitions with my Dad to see who could get a word, a crazy word, that nobody knew. I do try, if I come across a word that I don't know, I do try to find the meaning.

Suppose you read a new word, and you have no dictionary around, how do you manage to read it?

I pronounce it and try to think of the words I've heard. Maybe I've pronounced it before, but not the same way, and I think about it and I try to find a root word, because sometimes I know the root word but don't know the rest of it, so I think about the root word, and I think about what it can mean. Or else I wait until my Mom comes home, and if she's stumped I ask my Dad, and if he's stumped I ask the librarian.

Do you belong to the library, and do you go to the children's library downtown?

Yes, I've been to the new [city] library and it's quite a nice place. It's

very sort of lavishly decorated. Very nice, and the [neighborhood library], I can't say it's all that good but, well, you know the librarians there and they know you and they're quite friendly, whereas in the new library there's so many of them and it's so big that you can't really get to know your librarian. And the books, there's so many! You do have a wider variety but, to me, you have quite a lot of trouble looking for a specific book.

Sheila, do you like to read comics?

Yes.

What kind of comics do you like?

Peanuts.

Any other comic books in the bookstore?

Oh, comic *books*. Well, I do like art and I look at the ways the illustrations are drawn, and I do read some of them that are funny. My friends usually read Archie, so that's the type of comic book I get stuck with.

Do your parents do a lot of reading at home? Do you have a lot of books at home?

Yes, quite a few. My whole family likes to read, and Dad encourages us.

How many books a week do you read?

Well, that depends how I feel, and what books we've got around. Like maybe I read quite a few books a week, but nowadays in the summer holidays my friends have a fort and I don't think I've read a book yet other than comics and stuff which they've got at the fort. But in wintertime when there's nothing to do I read quite a few books, but in the summertime when I have quite a few activities I don't read very many. I read about five books a week.

Where did you learn to read? Did you learn to read before grade one?

I don't think I can remember. Our family read a lot. Sometimes I remember that when we used to go to bed Liz would read me some. After she was gone I'd turn on the light and look at the book and try to identify some of the words that I could remember. But I don't know really how much I learned before I got into grade one. Most kids before they go into grade one can read a few words, but I don't think any child unless they've really practiced at it knows anything about reading; they may be able to pronounce words, but they don't know much about reading. I don't think I could read things before I went into grade one.

Did you go to kindergarten class before you went into grade one?

Yes I did. The teacher read to us quite a few times and that might've helped. . . .

Sheila, if you had the opportunity to do anything you wanted with school or with learning, without mentioning any names or anything like

that, what would you do to change things so that you could learn and enjoy as much as you wanted to? If you could change anything in your whole school system?

I'd put up a school board of my own.

A school board of your own?

Well, I wish I could find two or quite a few teachers that really enjoyed teaching and had a very wide interest . . . and I'd try to get them to teach me. I think they'd get bored, but if I could, and if they were willing, I'd like to try to do this.

SHEILA: GRADE NINE

Have you had any occasion to write poetry, Sheila?

Yes, I have. I like the Japanese style of poetry.

Is there a special style of poetry or special author that you've come to like?

Well, I don't know if it's my ignorance, but I don't like poetry if it's just blank verse, free verse that just sort of rambles on.

Have you written any poetry yourself?

Yes, some haiku. I like haiku.

Was it a teacher do you think that got you interested in it?

I read a book called *Little Plum* by Rumer Godden. It was about a little Japanese doll, about a doll house, and in it was some mention about haiku, and I really liked it. So it's something that's stuck with me.

Do you like creating?

Yes, I like language arts a lot.

What part of reading do you like best?

I like free reading, and grammar is interesting, but sometimes I get the feeling that I don't know what I'm taking it for. I like poems.

What do you do in a reading lesson at school?

We have something called Reading Programs. That's when we do phase sheets. There's a box and, according to your ability, there's blue for, let's say, the lowest, then it goes to pink to yellow to red or whatever, I don't remember the colors. We have several books about how to become a better reader and stuff like that and we do lessons in those—how to write outlines, essays, and things like that. And then there's various other things we do, like free writing.

What do you think about having youngsters write up a summary of a book after they've read the book?

Well, you test your memory to see how much you have retained. It gives the teacher the idea of the type of books you read. Maybe he finds out a bit more about you.

Is this good in connection with promoting enjoyment of the book?

No, I never enjoyed book reports. I'd rather just go up and tell someone about a book I read; then you don't have to worry about paragraph spacing—that's not hard, but it sort of detracts from it.

When you were here three years ago somebody asked you about workbooks and what you thought of them. Do you remember what you said then?

I think I said they were crummy or something.

Your main complaint about workbooks was that you never really had the opportunity to figure out why you got the right answer.

I still think that. They are very unstimulating—unless they're a novelty. It's really something, getting your very own workbook. But you can't talk; you just have to plod through the questions. . . .

Workbooks are supposed to have a particular skill that you are supposed to be practicing. If you knew or were told that this particular part was to develop this particular skill, would that make a difference?

Yes, it would make a difference. I'd try to use that skill to play a kind of learning game with myself, and often we *are* told; for example, in social studies, we may be told we're developing skills to go around the library. We're hardly ever just given something, except in math, and told to do it.

What do you think of spelling bees now?

I forget what a spelling bee is.

It's a competition for spelling words correctly, and you're eliminated if you spell a word wrong.

They're a waste of time. You're only given one word, and if you spell it right, then that's it; but let's say a person just ahead of you got a word you couldn't have spelled, and he did spell it correctly but you didn't even notice, you didn't even look at the board, so you missed it. I can think of better ways than spelling bees. I don't like competitions very much.

What are some better ways?

Mutual sharing, passing the knowledge on instead of trying to keep your knowledge to yourself.

How do you learn new words?

We have vocab cards. We have to find so many words a week. You write down a sentence; you have vocab cards—little index cards—and you just write down the word and the sentence you found it in, then the meaning. Then you look it up in the dictionary. We have to do that just the way the cards are done in the library.

You like reading for pleasure. Can you say anything about that? Just how much time should be spent on skills and how would you get children to read for enjoyment?

Reading for enjoyment, I think, starts at a very early age. If children notice that their parents have an extensive library, then they consider there's something to books. However, if they've never been around a library, and their parents don't have many books, their reading class is just another one of their subjects, and that certainly won't give them any incentive for reading for enjoyment.

Sheila, what use do you make of the library?

I'm scared of libraries. I paid a three-dollar library fine once, and that just sort of did it. Besides, a library isn't really that happy a place. When you go there, it's usually crowded. Everyone there is doing assignments, so the atmosphere isn't exactly "I've just come down to look for a book, I like books, I like to read"; it's usually "I've got this assignment I have to turn out on Monday, and it's Sunday." But I do go. I've gone down once or twice and went around and looked at the books. I really like that. I think our [city] library has quite a few activities, like recitals, and quite a few times they have trios, and they have a children's club.

You mentioned something about wanting to be a well-educated person. Does school interfere with that, or does the school help with that?

School interferes with that. It's hard for me to pay attention when I'm not interested. That's one thing I have to force myself to do, and in quite a few of my subjects my span of attention is quite short, and most of the things I do in school I'm not really interested in. I'd like to learn about artists and dancers. I'd like to go to a school of technology; I guess that's where I'd actually like to go so that I could take an equal amount of dancing, painting, poetry—free subjects like that. But it seems like in school things like music aren't considered on the same basis as math. I can understand that probably they aren't because, well, to get a job you don't need to be an artist unless you are going to be an artist, but I'd like to take more, and I don't get it really. Let's take art. I'd like to study the history of some of the artists of the Renaissance and the different forms of painting and everything, but most of the students would think it was boring, and the teacher really has to consider interests; he doesn't really like to know that his class is bored and so he's not going to go into depth for a couple of students.

In any of your courses are you allowed to pick something you are interested in and do a project? Can you go ahead on your own at all?

Yes, in one subject called Project Period we're allowed to pick something of our own interest. We have to write a proposal. Some kids have been helping as Candy Stripers and some guys are taking movies of the library, and I worked with a boy in second grade and tried to teach him reading. Interesting things like that I really enjoy. I had to write a log book of what I'd done with this little boy, and it's really interesting. So

that's one subject where you're allowed a lot of freedom.

How would you like to be graded?

Effort is quite a big part of it. . . . I would just like to be tested on how much I remembered. I would just like to learn things. Like if I'm really interested in something I won't forget it. And so being graded varies with the teachers. I don't really worry about my grades; I rarely ever look at them. My mother doesn't either, so grades are no big deal.

What advice would you give to these people who have their final exams next week?

Study. Be nice to your teacher.

Do you have student teachers in your school, and do you think they can do these things you just mentioned?

Yes, we do have student teachers. What things?

Like when you spoke about communicating with the students.

We get student teachers every year, and it's really difficult for them because they're still groping around wondering how to do it, and trying things out, and they aren't really given enough time—once they've found it, they don't have enough time. Teaching is really an individual thing too. They know the student, they know how to communicate, but there are different ways and different students, and student teachers only have time to try out a few ideas, get the feel of the classroom situation, learn what they will have to do to discipline a class. Most of the student teachers really want to be liked a lot and they tell you that the first day.

Is that good or bad?

Well, it all depends on how they come on. I would probably feel that way myself, but I'm taking it from an uncompassionate student's view: there's this lady up there and she is saying things like I want to be your friend—I know I may be sounding mean but that's the way it happens, that's the way it comes on. I always think to myself, she's trying. . . .

What advice would you give to student teachers? Should they come on stronger? Should they try not so hard to be liked?

We've had a student teacher in math, a student teacher in science, a student teacher in language, and we've also had substitute teachers. I don't know if substitute teachers are a lot different from student teachers. It's good if they come on not strong but interested, and if they know what they're talking about and if they're well prepared and they're not wishy-washy. We had one substitute teacher who told us to read aloud, one at a time, from our books, but he said, "I'm not going to ask anybody. You just pick a time to start and stop reading yourselves." This really made the class listen; they were listening for the break when they could come in, but they were still listening to what they were reading—it wasn't

going in one ear and out the other. They were looking to see who was going to read and they were looking at the pages, and they weren't fooling around because they were curious.

If you could do anything you wanted to make the school the very best place for learning that you could, what would you do?

I would make sure that every single teacher that was there knew what they were talking about, could communicate to kids, and wanted to. That is about the main thing that I would do.

OPENING CLASSROOMS AND INDIVIDUALIZING ACTIVITIES

Students involved in an individualized reading program began to design their own language arts curriculum as well. Elizabeth Gonzalez teaches at Aetna Elementary School, Gary, Indiana.

A MOTIVATIONAL SIXTH GRADE READING PROGRAM

Elizabeth Gonzalez

Students' remarks such as "Reading is a bore," "Books turn me off," and "I never read" made me turn to an individualized reading approach at the beginning of the current school year. The sixth graders with whom I was to work were from a predominantly white middle class neighborhood. The reading group was comprised of twenty-one students, and all were considered to be "good" readers.

The first two weeks of class were spent testing and discussing the new reading program. During these sessions we talked about books the students had read, their reading interests, hobbies, and favorite subjects. My overall goals were that the students would improve their reading, enjoy a wide variety of literature, be able to investigate areas of their own interest, become responsible for their own learning, and most important, that they would read, read, read. Procedures were set up for scheduling individual conferences, and methods were demonstrated for recording individual progress.

The first "formal" reading lessons were comparatively traditional, in that reading assignments were taken from a basic reader and study exercises were assigned. But these activities made available precious time which would be crucial to the success of the program. Three important tasks were accomplished.

First, I was able to zero in on individual strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes. Time was spent constructing individual reading profile cards, individual conference reports, and individual record sheets, the last to be used by the students to record their own progress.

Second, I was able to gather a wide range of reading materials which would provide a rich environment. Encyclopedias, atlases, dictionaries, thesauruses, and magazines (*Time*, *Newsweek*, *National Geographic*) were made available in the classroom and school library. Trade books were readily available from the school's material center and from the public library, which scheduled a library trailer twice a month at the school. Also available were hundreds of paperbacks that had been accumulated from private sources and Scholastic Book Service Clubs. Children's inter-

ests and reading levels were the criteria used in selecting books for the classroom collection.

Third, teaching and diagnostic materials were collected from a variety of sources, and a suggestion box for various activities was placed in the classroom.

Students began selecting books from the classroom or library for their reading assignments. I set up a reading unit on biographies since several students had shown an interest in them. After a group introduction to the biography, each student set out to select one of his choice. Students and I met for individual and group discussions regularly. At times we formed small discussion groups for sharing books and ideas.

Something unforeseen occurred. Not only were the students involved in choosing their own reading, but they were designing their own language arts curriculum. After reading a biography of Mark Twain, two girls involved the rest of the group in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. Students discussed the characterization of Tom and Huck, then went on to compare them with boys of today. The girls created an original script of their favorite episode and presented it to several sixth grade classes. Two other girls, after reading *Invincible Louisa* and *Little Women*, wrote a script and later compiled a vocabulary list in the form of an analogy exercise which was used by the entire group.

Some students made comparisons of biographies written by different people. One boy, for instance, compared two biographies of Crazy Horse, found discrepancies, and launched his own research. Using several sources, including a Sioux descendant, he drew his own conclusions and presented a report to the group. He is now investigating the circumstances that led to the recent Indian uprising at Wounded Knee, South Dakota. Other students, working together, compared the biographies of Abraham Lincoln written by Carl Sandburg and Sterling North.

After reading a biography of Jules Verne and his book *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, a student wrote and presented to the class a delightful science fiction story, complete with illustrations. The biography of Langston Hughes uncovered feelings in a would-be poetess; her activities had a rippling effect and several other students began writing poetry. We now have a Poet's and Author's Corner.

Biographies prompted other activities. One student, after reading *Profiles in Courage*, listened to the score of *Camelot*. Reading *The Story of King Arthur and His Knights* naturally followed. As a result of reading about Clara Barton, the origins of the Women's Liberation movement were pursued. A sportsminded youngster researched hockey after reading about a hockey player, and Helen Keller's biography spawned an interest in writing Braille.

The program has been in operation for three months; several students have shown by their selections and behaviors that they are responsible for their own learning, several have shown a keen interest in selecting their own reading materials and pursuing their own interests, and several are totally free in their selections.

The program is not a panacea for teaching reading. There are many problems: accurate record keeping is time consuming, planning is done in the wee hours, and much more time is needed for individual conferences. Some students need more guidance than others, but as they become more secure in developing their own sense of responsibility, they will be motivated to become totally involved.

The rewards are great and the future looks promising. Observing a previously uninterested child initiate his own learning situations, watching him learn how to learn, sharing his enthusiasm as he reads a favorite passage—these more than compensate for the extra hours devoted to planning and preparation.

Anne M. Mcar-Crine,
Université de Montréal

BILINGUAL LITERACY

It seems most advisable to teach Northern adult Indians literacy skills in their native language when they first enter school. Concurrently, they should also be taught oral proficiency skills in English. Once they have become literate in the vernacular and fluent in spoken English, they should then be taught to read and write English. When the students master literacy skills in both English and their mother tongue, theoretically the emphasis in the curriculum could be put on either one of the languages.

One might object that the bilingual education process is long and costly. It should be pointed out, however, that the bilingual education model gives the Indian students better chances to succeed in school; moreover, the self-image of the Indians will be restored through a recognition of the language and culture of their ancestors. This positive self-image, as well as literacy in the native language, can only help to increase the autonomy of the Indian communities which, in turn, will create a more harmonious integration of the Indian minorities into the larger Canadian context.

CHANGING THE APPROACH

Providing a rich and open environment with a wide range of alternative activities allowed students to find their own individual levels of accomplishment. Ellen Gow and Christopher Dougherty teach at West Brookfield Elementary School, West Brookfield, Massachusetts.

Ellen Gow and Christopher B. Dougherty

When classes began last fall, it looked like an educational "sure thing." Our class sizes were normal; the home and community environments were, for the most part, pleasant. Our students seemed bright and able. Each teacher in this departmentalized grade five and six system taught his or her own specialty. Out of six periods per day, one was set aside for planning and preparation. The staff was not bogged down with police duties. Each section of grades five and six was a homogeneous group. It all seemed ideal.

By early February, we were pulling our hair out in chunks.

Many problems were straining our resolve—the boredom that came from repeating the same subject all day long and the difficulty of working in a lump of time with the "bright students," then having to alter that approach to teach the "slower learners." We felt that we weren't reaching enough of our students in each forty-five-minute segment. Long range lessons had to be ended too many times at crucial points because the class time had run out.

Without realizing it, we had moved toward a change all along. In an effort to breathe life into the reading program, we had spent most of the class money on paperback books for a small but growing library corner. Students possessing at least basic skills were lured into reading their own books during class time. Reporting was simplified and replaced with a short personal conference, with testing minimized. We were attempting to establish a means of success for each child, to create a system where each student could work independently. We were looking for motivation and interest; we wanted an atmosphere that would instill student self-direction and responsibility. Our classrooms were adjacent and connected by a heretofore unused door, and we decided to combine classes, with the fifth and sixth graders in the same rooms.

We decided to implement a contract method that had been used the year before. Each Monday the kids were given a choice sheet and a blank

contract. They chose the work that they would do during the coming week and signed their names to the contract. These choices were supplemented with mandatory spelling work, mandatory reading, and the option for extra credit (those two words are worth a million to those kids with less than average motivation).

One section of the choice sheet dealt specifically with reading, either free reading from the class library or stories from basal readers. With these, plus the later addition of magazines and newspapers, each child accomplished a certain amount of reading each week, and this was checked during the class time. The second section dealt specifically with English. The mandatory spelling work coincided with crossword puzzles, syllabication, use of words in sentences, hidden words, and practice in writing each word correctly. Also included were ideas for creative writing such as started stories, news reporting, poetry, technical English work, and personal interviews. The final part was a language arts hodgepodge which included collages, dioramas, puppet shows, pantomime, short plays, and an assortment of other high-interest choices.

Before long, our rooms were divided into a library area, an individual area where students could read and do research or work at the tape recorders and headsets, and an activity area for group work, television viewing, filmstrips and slides, projects, and more verbal activities.

Our first actual week was a horror. We went home every day suffering from sore throats, headaches, and varying degrees of exhaustion. Gradually, suggestions made by students were implemented and clearly understood values were enforced. By the second week, even with 3 o'clock exhaustion, we were enjoying it!

The children who were able to function well before the change continued to function well. The real surprise, however, were the students who seldom were successful: they were finding their own levels of accomplishment. Brighter students were helping the slower students. Some who never said a word were actually heard to laugh during their work. The person who had previously climbed the walls because he had finished his work long before the others was able to play chess or checkers during his free time. For the first time students actually asked if they could stay in and work and even pleaded to take books home.

We supplemented the English choices by starting a poetry workshop, which lasted for two weeks with eight to ten students from each grade five section. We were able to study many aspects of poetry—haiku, limericks, free verse, and some of the technicalities as well. We also started a magazine and news broadcast program.

But, more importantly, what we also started was a growing relationship with the youngsters. Those with problems began to talk privately.

We had time to listen to a child with a joke; we had time to settle arguments and help with real learning problems. Some days are still a disaster and there are still problems. By and large, however, we and the children are learning and enjoying our stay in our combined classes.

Yvonne Waskin and Sheila Fitzgerald, Michigan State University

INDIVIDUALIZING IS NEVER DONE

Classroom teachers who become involved in individualized learning programs, open classroom techniques, or any program with a child-centered design know full well that certain demands are made on the teacher that are not a part of the teaching task where more traditional methods are employed. This holds true in the university classroom as well.

Professors recognize that students, even at the university level, have different competencies, experience backgrounds, and needs. They recognize that lectures and examinations alone cannot provide the information and experience students need to prepare them for teaching even though lectures and exams can be viable learning experiences if well-designed.

Some very basic decisions about the scope and sequence of content offered during the course have to be made. Presentation of the more theoretical information must be carefully planned. The effort to create a balance between theory and practice, between the need for a fund of knowledge or a more basic practical overview of realistic situations, means that the professor must reexamine his methods and materials constantly.

REVISION ON SITE: A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN

Roberta D. Riley and Eugene C. Schaffer

Barren, utilitarian classrooms are not enjoyable living environments for most students or teachers. Ways for making the classroom a more lively, personal place are suggested here by Roberta D. Riley, assistant professor of English and education, Valparaiso University, and Eugene C. Schaffer, Temple University.

Few fantasies are more enjoyable than dreaming about the house you are going to build or musing about the apartment that you will furnish. The selection of a chair—say a green velvet bean bag for the living room—offers a chance to make your inner life visible for friends and visitors. Contrast this involvement, sensitivity, and intentional selection with many classrooms you have seen. If your experiences are similar to ours, the monotone walls, thirty-odd pieces of crippled furniture, and "mop and glo" floors are barely inviting. The ideas we would like to share are tentative and may suggest ways for making your classroom your own. Most of these suggestions have been tried in classrooms, and the practical nature of the suggestions we hope will encourage you to look at the environment you and your students share.

Bathtub Couch. These couches are an inexpensive recycling of the old bathtub with legs. Plumbing suppliers, junkyards, and houses marked for demolition often yield old bathtubs that can be converted into humorous and inviting reading couches with the aid of brightly colored throw pillows. Put the tub near painted orange-crate bookcases and fill it three-fourths full with throw pillows. The tubs are surprisingly comfortable and very secure.

Hammock. Make your own hammock. *How to Make Your Own Hammock and Lie in It* by Denison Andrews is an excellent guide. Hammocks have the advantage of easy put-up and take-down for changes of activities. Hang the hammocks in corners of rooms, between sturdy bookcases, or in cloak rooms. Strong hooks can be anchored in the wall for safe hanging.

Fluff Chairs. Buy ten pounds of pillow stuffing and pour it inside a colorful sheet after you have sewn up the sides. When the stuffing is in place, stitch the sheet closed, forming an enormous pillow. This pillow can be shaped into a chair, lounger, or mattress by any child. Some other very easy chairs can be created from unusual items. Cushioned chimney

flues make fine footstools or seats. Tree stumps can be a natural setting for sitting, and car and trolley seats add character to a room.

Old Furniture. On an old 6x8 or 9x12 rug lay out a living room of overstuffed chairs, lamps, and tables. Make it a comfortable place to read—like home. If you're teaching literature by historical periods, furniture appropriate to the time can involve students in imagining the era.

The Bookshop. Set up a section of the room with a bookshop atmosphere—chess tables and a wide variety of books—and give it a clever title: Second Hand Rows, Hardily Used Books, The Bookie, or The Book Rack. Ask used and rare-book dealers to come to talk about the book business. Writers could read aloud and share their craft in this atmosphere. This corner is a perfect spot for classroom games and small group discussions.

Comfort isn't the only advantage to be gained by altering the environment. Privacy is often left out of classrooms. The suggestions listed below reflect ways to increase privacy.

Pipe Tunnels. Drainage and sewer pipes are difficult to obtain, but if you can procure one, place a mattress and a light bulb inside and you have an environment reminiscent of reading under the bed covers with a flashlight.

Pup Tents. This is a place for imagination and seclusion. Small groups can write plays or plan surprises for the class.

Plastic Drop Cloths. Hanging plastic curtains from the ceiling around a corner of a room can make a small group private and intimate.

Cardboard Construction. Some younger students delight in building houses for their work area. Castles and forts made from mailing tubes, refrigerator boxes, or plywood are free standing structures for the student who needs to get away from the busy class.

What can you do to enhance your classroom? The examples cited are a partial selection from schools we have seen. Ideas are available in furniture magazines, do-it-yourself books, and your own home. There are many sources to tap. Two excellent guides are *Nomadic Furniture* and *Furniture You Can Make*, both by James Hennessey and Victor Papanek.

Besides being fun and refreshing, decorating a classroom may have other beneficial effects. Students may see schools differently as a result. Anxiety about learning and achievement may be reduced. School tasks, through association with a lively place, may become more enjoyable. Finally, both teachers and learners have the opportunity to expand their perception of what makes up furniture.

Offering alternative environments to your students can be just a start. Give them places to be comfortable, private, and secure and, in time, help them develop their own living space. Blueprints, measurements, or-

ganizing materials, and attention to details will provide learning experiences for them as well as give a sense of accomplishment in developing their own room. Sit back and involve your students in owning a piece of the school.

Joy E. Colbert,
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

PERSONALIZING THE CLASSROOM

Shaping space . . . at least in the classroom we could determine not to crowd ourselves. Students could exercise constructive control over their environment, hence over themselves and how they learn. And even a spirit of class community might evolve. . . . I was excited, but would the students be? If only the room weren't so sterile. If only it belonged more obviously to the students.

Proceeding on the you-can't-tell-'em; you-gotta-show-'em theory, I decided to spend the next weekend humanizing that room. Accordingly I solicited the services of several students from my classes and of the art teacher. The room began to fill with mobiles, paper flowers, driftwood, and shells. Bulletin boards boasted bright borders while colorfully embroidered burlap curtained the first section of glass panels that looked into the hall. Finally, sealed cartons of Punch 'N Grow flower seeds were placed on window ledges, along with one carton of coleus already displaying their red, yellow and green. When we finished our work that Saturday afternoon, we left the room in that inviting stage of being "almost transformed." Hopefully on Monday the students would be intrigued by what they saw and would join in to complete the transformation.

The spontaneous enthusiasm of the students was even greater than I had dared anticipate. We not only discussed ways to make the room more attractive but we also discussed how the room might reflect student interests and even how it might reflect that this was an English class. Here are some of the ideas we incorporated:

1. Terrariums in jars, origami, and macrame brought requests for demonstration speeches and process papers. Eventually we posted a list of things students wanted to know how to do, which in turn prompted more projects.

2. One of our two bulletin boards focused on special interests of the students. Every week two or three students chose a topic such as students and cars, students and foods, students and fashion, or students and hair styles. They gathered information from their fellow students which they

displayed on the bulletin board in combinations of photographs, sketches, poems, short stories, essays or collages.

3. The second bulletin board eventually evolved into a kind of weekly newspaper. Students signed up to cover sports events or to report on club activities. Our class selected a teacher of the week, and a student would sign up to interview that teacher and post the story on the bulletin board. Similarly, any of our students winning honors were "written up for the board."

4. A small table in the corner of the room inadvertently became the resting place of various odds and ends discarded after demonstration speeches, old pictures taken from bulletin boards, items in need of repair. One of the students, having just read "The Dump Ground" by Wallace Stegner, decided that this table held a rich source for composition ideas. Dubbing his discovery "Table Topics," he set about deliberately collecting odd articles and crowding them onto the table. Sometimes he paired items; at other times he worked with a haphazard arrangement. He not only produced several short stories and a poem inspired by his Table Topics but he intrigued others also, particularly the artists in the class.

With a few simple modifications in our classroom, students had learned that they could manipulate space for desired effects, that they could project their interests tangibly in an environment. As a result, class discussions were livelier and compositions were no longer voiceless. But even more important, at least in our class we no longer felt victimized by a stark, sterile, hostile environment.

Patricia M. Kriebel,
Seth Boyden Elementary School,
Maplewood, New Jersey

INNOVATING ADDITIONAL WORK SPACE

More than a year ago, I requested and drew up plans for an enlargement of my classroom to utilize an empty corridor outside my room. Because of fire laws, no furniture was allowed in the halls of any school. It seemed a shame to waste such beautiful space when I was in my own wing of the school, since no one else used the 3 by 24½ yds. corridor. Because the wall of my classroom was a structural one, it could not be broken open; instead, the door was removed from my room and an entire new wall was erected at the end of the hall where my wing began. My old door was inserted in the new wall. This, then, complied with fire laws, because now the corridor became part of my classroom, and I could put tables, chairs, and work centers in it. The walls were lined with bulletin boards to help keep the corridor warmer; artwork and tapestry weaving by the children now make the hall colorful.

Reforms conceived and implemented by the teachers and principal of this school resulted in a better language program and more relaxed classroom atmosphere. Glenroy C. Garden is coordinator of instructional materials, Drumheller Valley School Division No. 62, Drumheller, Alberta.

INNOVATIONS IN ELEMENTARY READING AND LANGUAGE ARTS

Glenroy C. Garden

Behind the 1928 vintage walls of East End Elementary School in Drumheller, Alberta, there lurks a school with quite contemporary ideas and methods of operation. The main curriculum area in which the school has innovated and experimented is in the domain of communications skills. It was felt some years ago that a judicious application of some modern educational ideas might help us realize better reading and language programs for all students. An enthusiastic staff guided by an enlightened administrator went to work on the problem.

Most of the two hundred students of the school come from within the city of Drumheller (pop. 6000), but about one-third are brought in by bus from outlying small towns and from farms. Although the school is old it has been upgraded in many ways, including carpets and adequate light control in classrooms and the addition of a modern library wing. The basement has been renovated into a number of special purpose rooms.

The school works on the "multi-unit" model. Grades one, two, and three form one unit, while four, five, and six form another. One teacher in each unit is designated unit leader, and together the two leaders and the principal form the Instructional Improvement Committee.

The school is blessed with an advantage which many lack. With only twelve teachers and a centrally located staff room, teachers can spend quite a lot of time in each other's company before and after school and during breaks. A lot of interaction related to teaching takes place in these informal meetings, and the spin-off in terms of facilitation of program is enormous. It must be conceded, however, that the school does have one major disadvantage. Grades one and two are located in another building across the road, and these teachers are not able to share in all the informal meetings.

Early in 1971, after hearing a good deal of talk on different modes of teaching and schemes of individualization, Principal George Kashuba

invited teachers to formulate ways of implementing some of these ideas. Much formal and informal discussion went on and a number of expert opinions were sought before any firm decisions were made. The staff eventually opted (against the advice of some experts) for a scheme of more homogeneous grouping for the reading program.

The school was divided into three sections. One section was grades one and two in their detached building. Teachers identified some students with learning problems and others who could progress faster than others in their grade and modified their reading groups accordingly. All children from grades three to six were given the Schonnel Word Recognition Test and ranked according to score. The grade two and three students in the main building were then divided according to achievement on the test, and teachers decided amongst themselves who would take the students with the highest scores, who the lowest, and who the middle groups. Grades four, five, and six were also ranked according to score, and teachers listed their preference for the level of class they would like. The names of two extra teachers were added to the list. The principal devoted his administration time to teaching, and one teacher gave up his preparation time. This gave some room for manipulation.

The group of lowest scorers was kept at ten, and it was also possible to keep the next group smaller than a regular class. The attempt to decrease the student-teacher ratio was central to the original intention. A special group of high-scoring grade four students was identified and taken aside for enrichment activities, and the group of top scorers was also considered eligible for an enrichment program. The other students were evenly divided into classes according to their achievement on the Schonnel Test, regardless of whether they were from grade four, five, or six.

There was general satisfaction with the way the program worked in 1971–72. The students most in need of help received more personal attention, and with the reading levels of the groups somewhat closer the teachers were better able to meet students' needs. Students adjusted quickly to the new situation and soon became pros at gathering up their books and pens and heading for another room. Everything possible was done to deemphasize the fact that grouping was made according to achievement so that no stigma would be attached to those doing the more fundamental tasks.

The experiment of narrowing the range of ability in each room was thought so successful that it was extended for the next year. Reading, language arts, spelling, and handwriting were all lumped under the title "Communications," and students were divided up in a similar manner to the year before. Sadly, the teacher who had given up his preparation time

no longer had his preparation period at the appropriate time, and so the pupil-teacher ratio moved up somewhat. There was satisfaction with the Communications concept, and the program moved on virtually unchanged into the present year. Unfortunately, classes became larger; an attempt was made to keep one class small, but it was difficult to do so significantly without overloading other classes.

When the reforms started, a "new" report card was introduced. It sought to evaluate each student in relation to his own abilities rather than in relation to his peers. Each course was broken down into about three categories for which a student received Commendable, Satisfactory, Improving, or Needs Improving. Presently there are separate report cards for divisions one (grades 1-3) and two (grades 4-6). The division-two report quadruples the categories but reduces the ratings to Satisfactory and Needs Improving. The division-one card also has a large number of categories but rates students according to a six-point scale. The introduction to the cards makes it clear that the school's philosophy is to evaluate a child's growth "as an individual and not in comparison with a group."

Students are tested against standards other than their own ability. The Gates MacGinitie is given three times a year and the Canadian Test of Basic Skills is taken by students in grades four and six. Parent-teacher interviews are held twice a year, and teachers are willing at these times to interpret achievement test results.

Recently a school board member looked into a classroom and saw only a handful of children; a few were editing a film, some were completing a writing assignment, and a couple were reading books. Where were the rest? Well, some were in the gym performing for another class a play they had made up themselves; others were in a corner somewhere planning a film; some were in the library; and others were painting posters.

Sometimes a class will take a large amount of time to work on a grand project such as a talent show. It is a mammoth effort to conceive the format, complete the advertising, organize the physical conditions, arrange the P.A., have the video recording system ready, work out the program, prizes, and profits, and a thousand other skill-building activities. Plans are currently being hatched for a newspaper which will involve every class in the school.

From one point of view the changes were effective because they were conceived and implemented by the teachers themselves. From another point of view, the changes worked because of the way in which the principal acted as motivator and facilitator. What the East End staff has done is to provide an enriching and creative yet relaxed and relatively low-pressure educational environment which is much more conducive to the self-actualization of the students and the teachers involved.

Individualized reading programs often suffer because of teachers' lack of time. Jack Cassidy, supervisor of reading of the Newark, Delaware, School District, describes a program which, by utilizing trained community volunteers, met students' needs and solved many problems with individualizing instruction.

THE CAFETERIA READING PROGRAM

Jack Cassidy

One wonders why the concept of individualized reading is not put into practice in more classrooms. Most teachers will attest to the effectiveness of the individual conference and individual selection of books. Why, then, are individual conferences based on individually selected books so absent from the curricular scene? The answer to that question falls in three overlapping categories:

1. Teachers who attempt an individualized program find it hard to manage. Allocating at least one hour a day for individual conferences is difficult if a teacher is to keep up with other curricular demands.
2. It is virtually impossible for teachers to read all the various books the children have selected, and many teachers suffer guilt feelings trying to discuss intelligently books they haven't read.
3. Most teachers find it difficult to teach reading skills using trade books that the students have selected.

At the John R. Downes School in Newark, Delaware, the principals and teachers were very much concerned about the lack of time for individualized reading in their school day. The reading program they used was, in their opinion, effective, but it made no provision for individualized reading. Furthermore, there was little time for the teachers to supplement the reading program with individualized reading activities.

But the John R. Downes School is fortunate to have a large pool of parents ready and able to help in the school. The principal was concerned that these volunteers were not being used to the best advantage. With the help of Dr. Jane Porter from the University of Delaware, an organizational plan was formulated to give children more opportunity for individualized reading using volunteers from the community. Thus the Cafeteria Reading Program was born.

Essentially the plan involves having volunteers report to the cafeteria two or three days a week for three or four hours each morning, usually

in teams of five. Students from various grade levels, usually starting with grade two, report to the cafeteria for a specified amount of time (usually for a five minutes to an hour twice a week). A volunteer helps them select a book or, if they have finished a book, schedules an individual conference with the student. One section of the cafeteria is used to spread out the books, another is used for individual conferences. Two volunteers help students find appropriate books, another two are used for individual conferences, and a fifth volunteer supervises and helps those students reading silently. There are usually no more than thirty students in the cafeteria at any one time, and these consist of students from three different classes and many different reading levels.

By having the students report to the cafeteria according to reading groups, the teachers have fewer students in their rooms and are thus better able to individualize instruction. The students reporting to the cafeteria are also afforded an opportunity to share reading experiences with children from other classrooms and grades. This sharing is usually done when the children are in the process of selecting their books.

The books for the individualized reading program are donated by students, teachers, and parents. The Downes School P.T.A. bought the original paperback collection, but these have been supplemented over the years.

Scheduling volunteers for the individualized reading was a major problem. After some trial and error a plan of joint responsibility was formulated; this was facilitated by the appointment of a volunteer coordinator. The school principal is responsible for scheduling the students into the cafeteria and for appointing the volunteer coordinator. The volunteer coordinator is responsible for recruiting participants from the community and scheduling them for appropriate days. Five volunteers a day manage the program, but it can operate successfully with as few as two or three.

More important than the scheduling of the volunteers is the training that is provided. This training is done by the district reading consultant and falls into the following areas: (1) the role of the volunteer, (2) reading levels and interest levels, (3) questioning techniques, (4) record keeping, and (5) classroom management.

During the first part of the training, volunteers become familiar with the rules of the school and with the various school personnel. More important, however, they become aware of the importance of their function in helping a child select a book and in listening to him share his experiences with that book. Warmth, spontaneity, interest, and positive reinforcement on the part of the volunteer are stressed during this part of the training.

During the second section of the training volunteers receive some infor-

mation concerning reading levels as they are applied to books as well as some brief means for determining whether a particular book is on a child's independent, instructional, or frustration level. Finally, volunteers are led to recognize that a child's interest may override any predetermined reading level. If a child is interested in a book, it may not matter whether it's at his frustration level or independent level.

Questioning techniques are crucial to the success of an individual conference, and volunteers are made aware of questions to ask to develop all comprehension skills. Volunteers are given specific questions to ask concerning main ideas, inferences, value judgments, themes, sequences, specific facts, personal interest, vocabulary, and study skills. During this session, volunteers are trained to stimulate a student's oral rereading in response to specific questions.

Record keeping on the part of both students and volunteers is an integral part of the training. Volunteers have forms to record individual conferences with children; these record forms are then put in the teacher's mailbox. Students also keep records of all books read.

Lastly, volunteers are given some instruction on proper and appropriate disciplinary techniques. Many volunteer programs fail simply because the volunteers are not able to maintain adequate control.

The advantages of the Cafeteria Reading Program are many. First, it gives the students a chance to share their reading experiences with interested adults. This, as the proponents of individualized reading have claimed, is probably one of the best features of individualized reading. The fact that the interested adult has probably had more time to read the book than the average classroom teacher is an added advantage of the program. In addition, the classroom teacher with smaller numbers of children is able to further individualize instruction for those remaining in the classroom. The volunteers, in addition to making a significant contribution to the school's reading program, become familiar with children's books.

The best indicators of the success of the program are its longevity and its extensiveness. The program is now in its fifth year of operation. Originally implemented with just third graders, it now includes students from grades two through five. Evaluations from teachers, parents, and students as to the effectiveness of the program can best be summed up in one word—GREAT!

RECONSIDERING THE LANGUAGE ARTS

Because of their emphasis on communication as both content and method, the language arts became the basis of a new, individualized program facilitating student interaction and cooperation. Neil Ellman is language arts supervisor of the Rahway, New Jersey, Public Schools.

Neil Ellman

As in many school districts throughout the country, reading scores in the Rahway Public Schools have declined during the last decade. Spurred by community pressure, the Board of Education declared that improvement in reading instruction should be the district's first priority. In addition, the district had experienced racial unrest, and the pressures for educational reform became enormous. Unfortunately, community pressure was not matched by community support for the funds necessary to implement significant changes. Thus, the availability of Title VII, Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) funds enabled the district to support many of its directives. Without such funds, efforts to improve reading instruction and reduce racial isolation would have been minimal. With such funds, we were able to develop not only new programs but also highly innovative ones.

Separate elementary and secondary school programs emerged. What emerged in the ninth grade was not a "reading" program or a "human relations" program at all. If reading is one of the language arts, and if the language arts are based on the common element of communication, then an integrated approach to language study would be most effective in dealing with reading deficiency. By emphasizing communication as its primary content and interpersonal interaction as its primary method, the study of language could also be the basis of efforts to increase interracial cooperation.

The program is designed so that each ninth grade English teacher is scheduled for a maximum of four classes, each containing no more than twenty students. Cafeteria duty and other onerous building assignments are eliminated. Each teacher spends a period each day tutoring and supervising students in the Hub, the resource and learning center. All teachers are assigned a common preparation period during which they plan jointly, share professional concerns, meet publishing representatives, take part in group process training activities, view presentations prepared by their colleagues, and socialize. Even simple socialization is important, for the

effectiveness of the program is enhanced by the cohesiveness of the program teachers. During the common preparation period, inservice training is provided by the language arts supervisor, outside consultants, or the program's three supplemental personnel—a reading specialist, a speech-drama specialist, and a school psychologist. For example, in response to observations made by classroom teachers, the psychologist has conducted seminars on such topics as "the effects of early bereavement on adolescents" and "nonverbal intelligence testing."

Inservice training is only a small part of the work of the supplemental personnel. The psychologist deals with students with serious emotional and adjustment problems. Students are referred to her by the district's Child Study Team or by the teachers themselves. However, the psychologist is familiar to all students, for she frequently works with teachers in the classrooms to analyze and deal with problems of discipline and group process. Frequently, too, her expertise is called upon to enhance the curriculum. The reading specialist works with individuals or small groups taken from the classes. It is understood by all teachers that a student who cannot function well in the classroom is better served by receiving intensive remedial instruction. The speech-drama specialist has developed a series of two-week workshops. During the course of the year, each student must register for any one of such workshops as readers' theater, improvisation, group discussion, voice improvement, acting technique, etc. For the course of the workshop, the student reports directly to the speech-drama teacher and not to the regular English class.

All of this is in addition to regular classroom learning experiences, which are highly individualized and dependent upon small group activity. In fact, small group work is both a method and an area of content, for one of the aims of the program is to increase understanding of group dynamics and, consequently, to develop cooperative leadership behaviors. The other most obvious feature of pedagogical method is that students are encouraged to learn by doing. They are continually reading, writing, speaking, improvising, role playing, recording, videotaping, filming, planning, discussing, building, and so forth. In each case, they are given a series of choices rather than one required assignment. When individual learning problems are uncovered, they are dealt with immediately by the teachers, preferably within the context of the regular classroom.

Classroom instruction is supported by the Hub, a large room to which students may be sent (or volunteer to go) for a variety of purposes. There they may utilize the audio- and videotaping equipment, reading machinery, learning packages, high-interest paperbacks, games, or simply take advantage of the privacy and relative quiet to complete their individual or group activities. The Hub allows the classroom teacher a great

deal of flexibility, and the teacher can always be confident that students in this area will be supervised by a program teacher.

Although the teachers themselves volunteered for the first year of the program, most had been trained or were experienced in teaching whole classes, and the new program represented a challenge. The teachers spent four weeks in a special summer workshop conducted by consultants from a local college.

The spirit of the new program is more difficult to describe than the structural features, but it is just as important. The relationships between teachers and students, students and students, teachers and teachers, and even between teachers and supervisors have changed dramatically—and it is this that has been the first achievement of the program. Problems do exist, and changes are continually being made; but we believe that we have begun to see real signs of success: a student who expressed the desire to be an English major in college (something she had never thought of before); a student who "hated" reading but now reads everything he can get his hands on; a teacher who, for the first time in her career, feels that she is really meeting her students' needs; a teacher who looks forward to being observed; and a supervisor who does not feel that he is merely going through the motions of trying to help reluctant learners and equally reluctant teachers.

Carmine F. Chickadel,
St. Mark's High School,
Wilmington, Delaware

AN ATMOSPHERE OF TRUST

Few people, especially somewhat insecure high school seniors, would express anything meaningful without trusting the individuals and teacher that make up the class. I wanted to somehow convince my students that their thoughts, ideas, theories, dreams, and hopes were not foolish or juvenile. I felt that if there were a sharing of these inner things with the class, we would reach a watershed. I knew the trusting had to start with me, but I was not exactly sure what approach I would take.

Perhaps I could read some of my poetry, the very personal stuff, although I felt I was gambling by exposing my soul to them. I was not sure, myself, whether I really "trusted." I often spoke about my wife and child with emotion to my students, so I was reasonably sure they thought I was human.

Student tutors working during regular class hours were able to provide the humanly satisfying working relationships necessary for individual work in reading. John J. Hassett teaches at the John Adams High School, Ozone Park, New York.

USING STUDENT TUTORS IN HIGH SCHOOL READING CLASSES

John J. Hassett

What is the best way to help young people in a high school remedial reading class where there exists an extremely wide range in pupil performance? I had a theory that it would be far easier to individualize instruction with the help of student aides. In the spring term of 1971 two events occurred which made it possible to test that theory: the guidance department offered the services of volunteers from the education department of a local college, and the principal obtained permission to start an after-school activity—the High School Homework Helper Program. College volunteers and high school tutors were thus made available to all reading classes. Now, almost four years later, the school is still using student aides in the reading classes, and the procedure has been more successful than previous methods used in the school.

The college volunteers were students in the Department of Education of Queens College. They served in the remedial classes for ten two-hour sessions during the term. These young men and women offered services that are rarely available to slow readers. They sat down with the pupils to discuss problems of the past and plans for the future, and they were frequently able to convince the high school pupils of the urgent need for reading improvement. In these interviews they would sometimes hit upon a major interest in the life of the youngster. Together the college tutor and the high school pupil would move to the school library and return with one or more books or magazines for home reading. At their weekly visits, the college tutors would inquire about personal problems and personal progress. Some of the pupils responded extremely well to their friendly tutors; there is also little doubt that the classroom experience was humanly satisfying and educationally valuable for the college students themselves.

In the Homework Helper Program, as it is conducted in a number of public high schools in New York City, pupils needing help in mathematics

or in reading report to school either before or after their school day for tutorial assistance. The tutors are other pupils in the school who have shown special ability in various subject areas. The tutors work under the supervision of a licensed teacher and are paid $1.60 per hour for an eight-hour week. The Homework Helper Program has been successful in helping large numbers of highly motivated pupils overcome their difficulties in specific subject areas.

In this experimental reading program, an attempt was made to reach pupils who were in great need of special help but who were usually unwilling to seek that help on their own time before or after the school day. These were the pupils assigned to remedial reading classes because they were reading two or more years below their grade level. Arrangements were made through the Homework Helper Program to give tutorial help to a group of such pupils in their regular remedial reading classes during the school day.

The high school tutors provided by the Homework Helper Program served very useful functions in the classroom. Sometimes they worked on a one-to-one basis with non-English speaking pupils. Sometimes they helped in the distribution of individualized reading assignments. (In a reading class composed of tenth year pupils where the reading ability ranges from the second grade level to the eighth grade level, there must be individualized reading assignments if students are to be helped at all.) Sometimes the tutors corrected the reading assignments, encouraging the pupils when they did well and pointing out the source of the problem when mistakes were made. Meanwhile, the class teacher was freed from many of the mechanical details of classroom operation and was able to supervise the work of both pupils and tutors, offering encouragement and assistance to both groups as they worked.

This pilot program has now been in operation in one school for almost four years. Two results of the project are particularly notable. First, a large number of pupils in these classes have been enabled to meet one of the requirements for high school graduation in New York City, namely, the attainment of a reading grade of 8.0 or higher. All pupils who attended classes with some regularity reached that goal, although some few youngsters needed more than one term of work to do so. Secondly, in the first five-month period of reading instruction the median gain for pupils attending more than 40 percent of their classes was 1.7 years. Comparable results have been obtained in subsequent terms.

Before starting the experiment four years ago I had read Robert Rosenthal's *Pygmalion in the Classroom*. I was curious about the relation between teacher expectation and student achievement. Some of the experiences in the classroom in the last four years would seem to support

Rosenthal's theories. It is now my assumption that any child who is not visually handicapped, or emotionally disturbed, or mentally retarded is capable of becoming an average reader. Moreover, although children do show wide variations in their ability to acquire academic skills, none of the pupils in my class could be classified as "stupid children." The main difference between above-average readers and below-average readers is that above-average readers like to read and do read and that below-average readers do not like to read and avoid reading whenever possible. Since reading is far less frequently necessary in our age of television and electronic communication, more and more pupils are falling below the reading norms established in previous generations. I am convinced on the basis of my experience that a moderate amount of practice in classroom reading exercises can help any student improve his reading scores to an acceptable level.

Isabell Wilkerson,
Rio American High School,
Sacramento, California

DEVELOPING A GOOD RAPPORT WITH STUDENTS

Such terms as "empathy," "rapport," and "affinity" all imply a positive relationship on some kind of equal basis. If such terms are to describe student-teacher relationships, then it is essential to abolish the traditional authority figure or parent role that teachers tend to adopt once they step behind a desk or podium. But it is equally important in doing this to be sure that the roles do not become reversed, so that students become authority figures and the teacher plays the part of an ineffectual patsy in the name of liberalized education. This can be avoided if the stage is properly set and the roles carefully thought out ahead of time.

First of all, in setting up a classroom, it is imperative to place everyone on an equal physical level. I find the circle to be an ideal arrangement. If there are thirty or more people in the room, which is normally the case in a high school English class, I arrange the seating so that there is a complete circle of desk chairs. I then arrange a second, outer semicircle in such a way that I have a good view of all the students. I take a seat in this circle, leaving my desk and work area behind me free so that I can keep necessary books and supplies within easy reach. This seating arrangement enables me to be seated at the same physical level as my students; yet, psychologically, I still maintain a focal point from which I can assume a leadership role as the situation requires it. The circle has still

other advantages. No one can hide in the back row. No one feels left out or isolated; I can maintain eye contact easily with all students. I never assign seats. Students sit where they wish. This is not as cumbersome as it may seem. Once a student has chosen a particular spot, he tends to remain there. Since I am not very good at remembering names, I find that I learn them more quickly this way than I ever did when I depended upon seating charts.

Setting the classroom stage in this manner is, however, only the beginning. It merely serves to pave the way toward a new interpersonal relationship between students and instructor. In addition to establishing a relaxed, friendly physical environment, I try to create a teaching partnership by reviewing my proposed lesson plans with the students. After all, since it is they and not I who will profit from the class, they should have the right to make decisions about what they wish to learn. I ask students to comment in writing on proposed lesson outlines, noting things with which they are already familiar, things which they would rather not do, and books or materials which they have already covered as well as suggestions on further supplementary materials. Before finalizing my teaching plans, I go over students' comments carefully and try to incorporate as many of them as I can. Suggestions which I cannot follow for one reason or another I try to discuss individually with the student involved. This gives me an opportunity to become better acquainted and to establish with that student the realization that I am sincerely interested in what he has to say.

THE WEEKLY ACTIVITIES SYSTEM

A weekly schedule permitting students to choose from a wide variety of basic skills activities allowed them to take more responsibility for their own learning.

Carol Huebner teaches at Dominquez High School, Compton, California; Gayle Jasso is formerly of Rosemead High School, Rosemead, California.

Carol Huebner and Gayle Jasso

Out of the frustration which grows from teaching students who do not want to learn but refusing to pass them for doing little or no work grew the realization that the next school year had to be approached in a totally new way. All of our teachers and colleagues taught in a traditional manner, but we found the daily lecture with occasional class time for homework too restricting. There was never enough time to include all areas of English, let alone have personal contact with all students. The attitude of youth in the classroom certainly was an indication that the traditional method had failed. Students were bored and apathetic. They hated English. With low reading scores and a low tolerance for homework, few students could ever hope to have a "successful experience." There had to be a different way.

Under a hot, sunny sky on a sandy beach, the *weekly activities system* was born. Two concepts are basic to this system: all areas of English are included, and skills are practiced within measurable units of time. As originally conceived, a quarter is broken into weekly sections, each week its own entity with a beginning and an end. During each week two types of work are done: *unit* work (whatever the teacher "teaches") and *weekly activities*. A two- or three-day block is reserved for unit work, with a similar block reserved for activities. The activities themselves are skill-building exercises listed in a packet provided students at the beginning of the year. These activities are grouped according to the skill they emphasize: Composition, Vocabulary Development, Grammar, Reading Comprehension, and Graphics.

Composition includes such activities as describing pictures objectively and subjectively, writing dialogues and monologues, using footnotes, reviewing movies, arguing one side of an issue, using business letter form, analyzing newspaper headlines and articles, writing a last will or a page of some historical figure's diary, taking dictation, and building paragraphs around bits of sentences. Vocabulary Development includes games such as *Scrabble* and *Password*, vocabulary cards, homonym lists, and career

terminology lists. Grammar includes grammar worksheets, workbooks, and programmed materials. Reading Comprehension includes SRA boxes, study skills workbooks, and quizzes on student magazine articles. Graphics allows for artistic expression through snipping and pasting in response to music or through creating a collage, a coat of arms, or a description of one's day. The specific activities are not as important as the concept; a discarded grammar text or someone else's idea for a three-week unit can be the basis of a new activity, and nothing need be expensive.

We found several basic rules to be workable. Every activity in the weekly activities system has equal point value, although the teacher can decide what length is a fair requirement for each ability level. To encourage experimentation, it is advisable to limit the number of times an activity can be done within a week or perhaps even within a quarter. To this end a teacher may also limit students' choices, particularly during the first quarter while the teacher is learning about the students and they are learning how to do each activity. Many activities, especially those in Composition, may be rewritten for a better grade. Activities done for extra credit must be approved in advance by the teacher and are not counted in place of required activities, thus preventing students from avoiding unit assignments or trying to make up for poor quality by doing vast quantity.

Every Monday the chalkboard contains a list of the work for the week, noting which days are work periods, how many activities are due by Friday, and how many points are possible. Also on Monday the teacher must read or post each student's accumulated points, indicating overdue work. It is important that consistent ground rules be decided upon in advance, at least for a semester, so that students can rely upon fixed limits within which to exercise their freedom of choice.

Once we created the system, the problem of recording student work immediately became obvious. Since the students do different things, the grade book's format also changes. Possibilities range from having a separate grade sheet for each student to keeping one grade book filled with scores labeled with assignment codes. With this initial problem solved, the creative teacher is ready to release herself and her students into a system limited only by her own imagination.

This simple framework of a *unit* plus *weekly activities* works very well in a general English class, allowing for the delightfully haphazard acquisition of knowledge and providing both supplement and reinforcement of unit assignments. However, we have found that the weekly activities system is equally successful with remedial labs and English skills classes. These classes utilize a more intricate structure of contracts, pre- and posttests, progress charts, student folders, and individualized grading scales.

Since the language problems are more severe in remedial classes, the course is organized around skills to be improved rather than around units. Students must reach objectives based upon the weekly activities and other individualized materials, while formal instruction is kept to a minimum. Fewer activities are assigned, and more time is spent on each one. Instead of accumulating a variety of supplemental information, the students master skills through the weekly activities. Aside from a few grammatical concepts, the only area which a lab class studies together is literature. The one or two periods a week spent reading and discussing a story or poem bring the class together as a group, and the students' oral responses give more life to the printed page, something which is important for poor readers.

For this more structured use of activities, detailed record keeping is mandatory. Students are tested to determine areas of weakness. Individual lists of activities are devised with students, and they chart their progress in a folder. The disadvantages for the teacher with large classes are obvious, but we have survived. Once the program is established and record-keeping techniques are mastered, the benefits far outweigh the drawbacks. In fact, no matter how we have integrated the weekly activities system into our courses, students remember most the work periods, and they speak of English and weekly activities synonymously.

This positive response from students has encouraged us to continue the weekly activities system. They enjoy exploring assignments and topics of interest to them. They like their freedom of movement within the room as well as their freedom of access to the no longer mysterious gradebook. They appreciate variety in the weekly routine. Equally significant is the fact that students who have never before been able to earn good grades in English now have a fair chance to succeed. In short, they like English.

And we appreciate the change in our relationships to students. The atmosphere within the classroom has become friendly and constructive, with many of the old discipline problems never occurring. It's not that the most dangerous gang members hurry joyfully into the room crying, "Goodie, it's weekly activities day!" No such luck. But they do sit down and wait with some interest to see the choices for the week, and we know that we could, if we dared, defy any of them to search the activities packet and find nothing of interest. The gap between student and teacher diminishes when the teacher is hugging, admonishing, rushing from desk to desk, trying to keep thirty-seven china plates spinning madly on top of their sticks. Original frustrations have been replaced by new ones, but after five years of experimentation and hard work, we find within the vast boundaries of this system solutions to the problems we set out to solve.

An individualized program based on students' wide reading in thematic interest units of their own choice involved students in their own education and resulted in improved performance in other skills as well. Alice Lowery Hibbard teaches at Lumpkin County High School, Dahlonega, Georgia.

THE OPEN CLASSROOM AS TEACHER RESPONSE

Alice Lowery Hibbard

I don't know which was my most compelling reason for searching for alternatives to the traditional classroom—my aversion to students visibly bored, my decision to disassociate myself from tracking and ability grouping, or, simply, the physical situation of my classroom. I shared a classroom, divided by a row of low cabinets, with the ninth grade English teacher. In their idle moments the students occupied themselves by throwing over erasers, books, pennies, and missiles ingeniously shaped from wire and metal in their shop classes. To reduce the chaos caused by the inevitable face-saving retaliation, we took the plunge one day, moved back the cabinets and—voilà! Instant open classroom.

I don't mean to seriously imply that mere physical arrangement can create the open classroom—far from it. But once we had gone this far, the ninth grade English teacher and I decided to go even further and design a new curriculum to go with our new space. In spite of my students' reactions to finding themselves face to face with ninth graders ("I dunno what 'cher tryin' to do, but it ain't gonna work!"), we enjoyed the feeling of freedom the larger open room gave us and wanted to capitalize on it by extending it to our curriculum.

When it came to designing the curriculum, we did what I guess most teachers would do in a similar situation. We drew on our backgrounds, what we knew of current educational research, and, perhaps most important, on our own feelings of what worked with our students. During the past year we had observed that our students seemed most content (i.e., more willing to sit down all at the same time) during those free reading periods when they could choose their reading material from our growing classroom collection of paperbacks. Fortunately, many leaders in the field of education had shown that the communication skills of English could be taught in virtually any frame of reference. Bolstered by this apparent move away from the traditional position of English as content that must be mastered at a given grade level, and strongly influenced by men like Fader and Herndon, we decided to make what we had formerly called "free" reading the center of our program.

The job of building a paperback library that could serve as reading material and textbook to some three hundred students was not an easy one. In the process I lost my remaining naivete as to how materials that really work can be gotten into the classroom. For the first year we could not use any state funds; they were designated exclusively for textbooks that must be selected from an approved list. Our North Georgia county is small and not prosperous and the county could offer little help. We tried an afternoon film program using low-cost rental films to earn money for books, but in the end we simply bought most of them ourselves. I mention this logistics problem because it is usually the first question I get when I describe the program to other teachers. The idea of spending one's own money for materials may be anathema to many, but we wanted the books badly enough and believed in what we could do with them strongly enough to go ahead and buy them. Besides, the money we spent was tax-deductible. [*Editor's note:* the reader is cautioned not to accept at face value the foregoing statement about an allowable deduction. The IRS in Illinois, at least, claims that a teacher's purchase of class sets of trade books or instructional materials is not a deductible expense unless required as a condition of employment by the employing school district; on the other hand, a deductible expense may be sustained if the purchase is clearly donated to the school district.]

Well indoctrinated by a fairly traditional teacher-education program as to what is supposed to go on in an English classroom, my graduate school–induced conscience paled at the thought of having my students spend *all* their time reading. Besides, I had spent too much time studying Margaret Early's stages of growth in literary appreciation not to worry about how my students were going to get to that exalted third level of "conscious delight,"* and the research on studying grammar seemed too contradictory not to have at least some of it in the classroom. And could I really leave out history of the language, mythology, semantics, and some study of rhetoric? Not to mention the media study that every well-dressed classroom should wear?

To reconcile what I was beginning to feel was good for my students with those beliefs I could not quite shake free of, we began to set up individualized "units" to cover all the phases we were going to include in the curriculum. By setting up individualized units that might range from suggestions for reading, writing, and discussing to page-by-page assigning of work to cover, we felt we could accommodate both the students who worked best in a structured situation and those who seemed to flourish

*See Margaret Early, "Stages of Growth in Literary Appreciation," *English Journal* 49 (March 1960): 161-167.

in a nonstructured one. We organized the program around thematic, reading-centered interest units like horror and the supernatural, initiation, alienation, mystery, sports, etc. Each of these units contained a brief discussion of the theme of the unit, some interest-catching book blurbs, a bibliography, and a list of suggested projects using films, filmstrips, records, photographs, tapes, and overheads. The readings included novels, short stories, poems, plays, and essays on all levels, so that the units could be chosen purely on interest.

To complete a unit, we planned for the students to explore the theme in reading and other media, to discuss readings and themes with us and with other students working on the same unit, and to express their own creative interpretations of the theme through writing and other media. We also included language units, grammar units, semantics units, and composition units. As I discovered my students' particular problems through their work in the interest units, I could channel them into appropriate grammar and composition units. As the students were ready for more sophisticated treatment of literature, they could move into units that emphasized the elements of literature as well as the ideas. The biggest advantage of individualized units, as I saw it, was that no student would be faced with reading material that bored him or with covering skills he had already mastered.

Based on this design, the students would be spending most of their time reading, browsing at the bookshelves, working on projects, and writing, either singly or in groups. There would be no grade divisions. Every student was free to choose among the units, and the other teacher and I would work with those units we felt we knew best. We would spend our time working with students individually or in groups, discussing and guiding our students' reading and writing.

As the year went on, the program began to shape itself to the students and to the reality of the situation. For my part, I found that with responsibility for up to thirty-five students each period, I could not always discuss their reading and writing as I had planned. Many times they read books like *A Clockwork Orange* or *Siddhartha*, books that I especially would like to have followed up, with no follow-up at all. They frequently wrote papers with glaring errors that went unmentioned by me. The students enjoyed the new-found freedom of wide reading, but many of them did not want to be bound by theme and so read more freely than I had planned. Some of them did not want to discuss their books to the extent that I did—they simply wanted to be left alone to read. They also rejected, for the most part, any formal study of the elements of literature, grammar, or rhetoric. Because we did respond to our students, we now have a program in which students are doing more read-

ing and writing but less formal study in grammar, rhetoric, and the elements of literature than ever before.

I do not want to give the impression that I relinquished my role as teacher in the classroom and let the students dictate the content entirely. Simply by forcing them to remain within the language domain, I was exerting authority and structuring their learning experience, but I think that by the time students are in the ninth and tenth grades, they certainly should have some responsibility for setting their own learning goals. The students know what their parents expect from them, they know what society expects from them when they leave high school, and they know what their eleventh grade teacher will expect from them. Based on this knowledge, the students should be capable of making their own choices and accepting the consequences of their choices. Also, the activities which the students rejected most strongly are those that are being most seriously and strongly questioned by educators today.

From what we have observed of our students' behavior, we believe the program has been successful. When given a selection of books ranging from *Ask Me If I Love You Now* to *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* and time to read them in class, students who had never read before began to enjoy reading. With students free to move around the room and to talk and with the high emphasis we placed on motivation and interest, our discipline problems were greatly reduced. (I heard recently that when asked about the low reading levels in the Atlanta city schools, one teacher commented that it was because she had to spend so much time telling her students to sit down and be quiet.)

Considering the lack of much formal study, we have also had some surprising results from the program. During the past year we have seen our students' reading tastes noticeably improve. Many of our girls, for example, began by selecting book after book about teenage love. When we could we discussed the books with the girls, pointing out the frequent shallow characterizations and stereotyping, but we did not criticize the girls for reading the books and in many cases simply left them alone to read. Gradually, however, the girls began to select books of greater sensitivity and depth, books like *My Antonia*, *A Farewell to Arms*, *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, and even, in one instance, *Pride and Prejudice*.

Another surprise, at least to us, was that even without instruction in grammar our students' writing has improved. (Because our students were spending so much time reading, we finally introduced a minimum writing requirement. We tried to fill the room with interesting writing situations, but left the final decision up to the students.) Some of the glaring errors have disappeared, but it is in sentence structure that the improvements have been most noticeable. Perhaps the improvement is the result of

individual attention—it is harder for a student not to listen when you point out an error on a one-to-one basis—but I am inclined to think this is another effect the wide reading has had.

We are now searching for some means of formally evaluating our program, but before we can do this we have to know what can be evaluated and what is important to evaluate. There is growing conviction that wide reading will increase reading level even without corresponding instruction in "skills," and our recent statewide testing indicates that there is at least a possibility that this is happening for our students. At any rate, this is one of the simplest areas to test. We can also test fairly easily the composition skills of our students, but what of the other areas, the intangibles like "appreciation" that we have stressed for so long in our classroom? Is it even necessary to have a test score to validate our students' experiences with books? When a student takes home a book like *The Catcher in the Rye* or *Lord of the Flies* to read on his own, must not the book have some very valid meaning for him? And if Frye is right about the unconscious element of literary symbolism, is it necessary to force the student to consciously identify the symbols for them to have their effect on him? Obviously I have posed questions I am unable to answer and I am speaking of only one of many nebulous areas. We have much work ahead of us if we are going to conceptualize and measure goals like these.

Roberta Wiener, **OPEN CLASSROOM**
Adelphi University

Do you have an open classroom? If your room is exemplified by options, alternatives, and respect for individuality, where the curriculum is flexible and various subjects and skills are integrated and the focus has shifted from the teacher to the learner, where each child's uniqueness is respected, then YES!

CHANGING
THE MEDIUM

These simple projects in photography involved second graders in creative writing and introduced them to several types of audiovisual equipment.

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CREATIVE WRITING THROUGH VISUAL LITERACY

Andd Ward

Recently an elementary school teacher came to me for some suggestions on how to use media to spark creativity among students. Joyce Jarvis, teacher at the Henry Barnard School in Providence, Rhode Island, was extremely interested in pooling resources and trying out some new ideas. THE PROBLEM: How to motivate second graders and help them improve creative writing and storytelling skills. THE SOLUTION: Get them involved in some visual literacy projects which make use of simple media.

Instead of embarking on a grandiose scheme, we started on a simple scale and then progressed to the more complex. The visual literacy projects we tried met the following objectives:

1. Given a Snapshooter camera, the student will shoot one picture of an object and will write a creative story about it when the print has been processed.
2. Using a Photo-Story Discovery Set, the student will sequence the pictures and then audiotape a narrative.
3. Given a wide assortment of magazine tearsheets, the student will select at least twenty pictures, sequence them, and write a creative story about them.
4. After planning on storyboard cards, the student will shoot twelve slides. When they have been processed, the student will tape a narrative.
5. After viewing a 16mm film clip commercial, the student will tape or write a creative story suggested by the film.

Snapshooter Camera. The plastic Snapshooter camera is an excellent mechanism for introducing students to photography. Although the camera can be used only outside on sunny days, there are numerous advantages. For one thing, the Snapshooter is inexpensive! It sells for only $1.50 if purchased in classroom quantities, $2.00 if bought singly. It is also simple to operate; even three and four year olds can use it without problems. Because of its simplicity, students can have success with their first attempts. Why complicate things? Save *f* stops, shutter speeds, depth of field, and other considerations for later. Instead, concentrate on choosing the right subject, standing with the sun behind your shoulders, and

holding the camera steady. And presto, excellent prints or slides from the camera of a second grader!

Simplicity is important in a beginning visual literacy project. Give students a topic they can handle with ease. To shoot one close-up of an interesting object is certainly within the realm of a beginner!

Photo-Story Discovery Sets. The second exercise involved sequencing cards from Photo-Story Discovery Sets 1, 2, and 3. Three students were handed sets of twenty-nine, twenty-six, and thirty-eight cards and were told, "You can arrange these pictures in any way to make a story. There's no right or wrong way. When the pictures are arranged, you can tape the story, using this cassette recorder." The children sat on the rug and spread out the cards before them. They were advised that one easy way to start would be to separate the cards into groups (each set can be broken down into several smaller stories). With enthusiasm and great interest, the children sequenced the photo cards and then audiotaped the stories. When the tape was played back, the whole class gathered round to listen and look. Three more youngsters arranged cards and the process was repeated. Amazingly, both sequence and story line were quite different each time!

Magazine Tearsheets. The second graders were given large quantities of magazine tearsheets and were asked to select at least twenty pictures each. "You can put the pictures together to make a story," I explained. "Arrange them in an order that makes sense to you and then paste them onto a roll of paper. After that, you can write a story to go along with the pictures."

When these projects were completed, youngsters used the opaque projector to show their stories to classmates. Each child placed his roll of paper in the projector and showed the pictures one by one as he narrated the story.

Slide-Tape. In this activity, children first planned their work on storyboard cards, seeing the pictures "in their mind's eye." Then they went outside in small groups to shoot slides. Each child was armed with a Snapshooter camera, a film cartridge, and sketched-in storyboard cards. The photography session was extremely popular because children viewed it as the most unique and personal visual literacy experience.

16mm Film Clip. Did you know that many television stations will gladly give you old 16mm commercials? These discarded and outdated film clips can be an invaluable source of ideas for creative writing and creative storytelling. In this exercise, children viewed film clips several times and then wrote imaginative stories about them.

A COURSE FOR PRODUCERS

Bernarr Folta involves students in projects utilizing several media to create concrete communication products in order to instill in them a sense of their roles as producers of language. He teaches at West Lafayette High School, West Lafayette, Indiana.

Bernarr Folta

Even though I favor heterogeneous grouping in elective programs, I developed a special course for those students who lack basic skills in reading, writing, and speaking. It was more than a "holding course" for remedial students. It's what I would term "a course for producers." The rationale underlying the design of the course was this: before students deliberately develop themselves as skillful readers and listeners, they must first sense their roles as producers of language. And for the remedial students, the acquisition of that "sensing" can best be achieved through the development and evaluation of concrete communication products, such as visual-verbal compositions, booklets of writings, cuttings from plays, short television productions, slide-tape presentations, and learning kits designed for imparting information to children in the elementary schools. My major aims were to make the students more sensitive to audience response and to help the students conceptualize their roles as successful communicators.

I began by emphasizing the concrete. During the first week of the semester, I demonstrated how to drymount pictures and neatly trim them. Then I had small groups of students put together visual compositions which had to include at least four drymounted pictures and a one-sentence caption. Each student had to add his signature to the display. I followed this up with four other assignments combining visuals and writings. In one the students had to find a picture of a person with a serious expression, glue the picture onto a 5x8 card, and below the picture write a line of humorous dialogue which added irony to the visual event; in another, they drymounted a picture of a setting and beneath it applied Richard Young's TRI tagmemic design to a three-sentence paragraph, thus leading the reader to discoveries on two levels; in another, they made a picture-lift transparency which they showed while reading one of their own writings and playing background music; and for still another, they selected three pictures to help convey the setting, characterizations, and events in a short narrative they had written. The short visual composition tasks were a good way to begin the semester: they facilitated group

work, they could be done in a short amount of time, and they provided "concreteness."

My next move was to introduce a series of language games for charades. Teams of students were asked to act out simple rhyming words, concrete words, abstract words, job words, titles, and given events. At first everyone seemed a little reluctant to play the games, but a few brave souls acted out their parts and got the class rolling. Everyone participated, and at one point they wanted to conduct a formal debate. By modifying formal debate procedures, everyone had an opportunity to participate. It was at this stage that the students assumed more leadership in directing the events in the class.

Following the debate, we read aloud scenes from twelve plays and selected two of the scenes to act out for a television taping. Students appointed their own directors, actors, and stage crew and were off! But one group went off too far. Because I let the two groups practice in separate rooms, one group had a difficult time pulling it together. Too many distractions. However, the other group did quite well after several tapings. The next time I try the play rehearsal of scenes, I won't let my idealism get the best of me: I will have the students select scenes from one play instead of two and I will require all rehearsals to be in the one classroom I can observe.

Near the end of the semester, students were asked to prepare a thirty-second "I" documentary for TV taping. Using at least one graphic and two objects, the students had to prepare a tape that served as an introduction of themselves to an audience of people their own age.

Scripts had to be written and followed for all the TV work. Other major written assignments included a sequence of short personal narratives and one expository writing. The audience for the latter was any new student, and the class product in this case was a booklet of writings on interesting but sometimes hard-to-find places in the community. Almost half the class came to school one Saturday morning to add the finishing touches to the booklet: they typed, drymounted pictures, collated pages, sketched, and bound the book. In the following week, the class presented the booklet to our principal as a gift to the library.

As a sequel to the first semester course, I taught a nine-week elective course called "Communicating with Young Children." Many of the remedial students who had been in my first semester course were also in this course, but a number of average and above average students were also in the class. Both types of students worked together in developing learning kits for children in the elementary schools. The students had a number of rigorous tasks to perform: research a limited area of study in science, local history, or poetry; specify learning objectives for the kit;

write a two- to four-page lesson, a test, an answer key, and a feedback sheet; prepare visuals to accompany the lesson; prepare a picture-lift transparency and a thirty-second tape to introduce the kit; and then go into the elementary classroom to find out how the children worked with the materials. Students also prepared a slide-tape presentation and three follow-up activities for a second kit.

I'm confident that I am moving in the right direction with my work for remedial students, but I also realize the need for refinement. Students like David keep me nailed to the tasks that lie ahead. David is one of those terribly shy kids who would call you out in the hall at the beginning of the semester and ask, "Do you really think anyone in there really likes me?" Near the end of the semester, David asked to give a speech to the whole class. He wanted to motivate the students to do the best possible job in writing for the class booklet. He talked for twenty minutes. When he finished, the whole class applauded. Two students shook David's hand. When I approached David, he looked at me with joy and said, "Do you know that this is the first time in my life that I realized I had a spirit . . . ? No, a soul . . . No, do you realize this is the first time in my life that I had the strength to stand up before a group of people to give a speech and not feel afraid?"

Barbara A. Goddard, Mohawk Trail Regional High School, Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts

VIDEOTAPE: A BOON TO TEACHERS

A recent boon to the classroom teacher, but especially to the teacher of low-ability students, is that wonderful machine—the videotape recorder. The youngster need not face the terrifying horrors of the stage and those critical-eyed audiences; he can perform right in the classroom, with his fellow equals the only lookers-on. What a saving for his poor deflated ego! He can be a ham and not only get away with it, but be praised for it.

One very positive experience my students enjoyed was a class enactment of a mind-boggling western called *The Adventures of the Lollipop Kid*. The class wrote and taped the whole script, which consisted of preliminary scenes of the Old West (shots from filmstrips and actual scenes from the area), the actual play (containing a barroom scene, a brawl, dancing girls, and a shoot-out), and a finale showing horses racing forward and back to the theme from the *Lone Ranger*.

LET'S MAKE A COMMERCIAL

A two-week unit in which students wrote, produced, and videotaped their own commercials met with enthusiastic response and noticeably improved the classroom atmosphere for the rest of the year. Dennis Badaczewski teaches in the College of Education, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio.

Dennis Badaczewski

By a perverse process I have never understood, new teachers almost always seem to get the "slow" classes. Perhaps it is a type of hazing. Like many schools, ours was ability grouped: bright kids with bright kids, average kids with average kids, and slow kids with slow kids. The first few years section numbers were assigned in rank order. If there were ten ninth-grade sections, 9-1 would be the brightest and 9-10 the slowest. A few humanistic teachers, however, opposed this method of assigning numbers as being damaging to students' self-concepts and stereotyping. This lobbying brought about a change in policy; section numbers were randomly assigned.

The ploy worked for about a half day. By the time the 9-2's came to my class that first afternoon of school they were calling each other "retardo" and informing me they were "dummies." I tried to assure them they were not, but they knew better. After all, they had been together for eight years.

The administration had made minor provisions for the 9-2's. We had a slow anthology and a slow grammar book and a SRA reading kit. The stories in the anthology were childish, the grammar book was boring, and the SRA reading kit was the same one they had used for four years.

The kids were active, verbal, and aware. They also could not or would not read or write. When we talked or had discussions they were eager and interested. When I asked them to read, write, or work in the reading kit they turned sullen and a little hostile. Things began to get worse. I felt duty bound to follow the curriculum and spent more and more time pressing them to work. They in turn became more disruptive. The battle was on.

The 9-2's were not inner city or minority students. They were mostly middle class kids who lived with both parents, dressed well, and seemed to enjoy most creature comforts. Their fathers were either skilled tradesmen or small businessmen. Another common denominator was a total lack of regard for school. They were money oriented and proud of it. Most

had part-time jobs. John had three: a morning newspaper route, an after-school job in a supermarket, and a weekend job in a pizzaria. At fifteen, he had $6000 in savings. Mike liked to tell me that his father went to the sixth grade and made $20,000 a year. "How much do you make, Mr. B?" My answer did not elevate me in their esteem. I began to think they might be right.

Serendipity struck in late January. It was not long since Christmas vacation but a long time until spring break and still longer until June. It was near the end of a particularly trying Friday and I blurted out, "I'm tired of trying to teach you anything. What do you want to do?" Dave usually had a quick answer and he wasn't at a loss this time. "Why don't we make a TV show, Mr. B?" I laughed and so did the rest of the kids not saying "yeah, yeah." Soon the bell rang and they were gone.

That evening I thought about what Dave had said. The class wouldn't do what I wanted to do; maybe I should try their idea. The school had a videotape recorder, donated by the Boosters Club for the use of the physical education department, that was not used very often. We couldn't do a regular TV show; I had neither the technical expertise nor the confidence in the 9-2's. But why not do commercials? They are only thirty to sixty seconds in length, are familiar to the students, and they might even be educational. That weekend I put together a tentative plan to use commercials and their production to show the class the value of that subject we call English—words: how they are used and how they are interpreted.

The next day the VTR was in the classroom and the class was soon clustered about it. When I told them we were going to make some TV commercials, their response was one of disbelief. The first day was spent playing around with the VTR with everyone having a chance to ham it up. The next step was to introduce some terms which I later found out were elements of contingency management: "If you want to make commercials then you'll have to. . . ." The agreement was to not just rehash current commercials or make new ones up but to also learn about commercials: what makes a good commercial, why do companies advertise, what techniques are commonly used, and what are the different types of commercials.

Our first step was to study existing commercials. We were able to study commercials in the print medium from several magazines lying around the room. The students' television viewing also took on a new perspective. In a few days they came to several conclusions about the advertising industry. Their major conclusion was that it doesn't matter what you are selling, but how you sell it. They soon were able to break most commercials into five general categories: (1) everybody is buying

it so you should too, (2) this is not for everyone, just the chosen few, (3) this product will change your life, (4) the anti-commercial, and (5) the humorous commercial. The "dummies" were awfully perceptive.

On the fourth day we had a visit from a reformed advertising copywriter friend of mine. Among other things he informed the students that many products in the same category, soaps for example, are manufactured by the same company. We were also told that the most expensive item in the manufacture of liquid soap is the plastic bottle, about 1½ cents per unit. The 9-2's were excited! This was real, and not at all like English. Ten students returned to continue the discussion after school.

On Friday we got into a discussion about the relative value of advertising. My materialistic students were quick to mention that without commercials we would not have TV, or at least free TV. They were also able to realize that every time they bought something, they were paying for the advertising of that product. I was startled when Jamie brought up a philosophical question: "Is Crest the number one toothpaste because it is the best, or do a lot of people buy it because commercials tell us it is number one?" They went home for the weekend with instructions to think of a plan for next week.

Monday's class started out in turmoil, with ideas coming from all parts of the room. The one they liked best was to have a competition. They decided to break into four groups and make four commercials about three mythical products. The judging would be done by me or whoever I chose. Automobiles, airlines, and other large products were rejected because of space, time, and financial resources. After much haggling among the students, three products were selected: Zit Skin Cleanser, Sparkle Toothpaste, and Uncle Fruit Cereal. The class would have three days to prepare and rehearse their commercials. Friday would be shooting day.

This would be more than a fun assignment. Each group had to write a script for all three products. The writing had to be organized, concise, and well planned because each commercial had to be exactly thirty seconds in length. They also had to do all the art work involved in producing the commercials. This from a class who groaned when asked to write a sentence.

First hour was an all ninth grade study hall. I was able to convince the principal and study hall monitor that this would be an ideal showcase for the 9-2's commercials. It would give the "dummies" a wide audience and a chance to show off before their peers. It was decided that the ninth graders in study hall would serve as judges, and the principal would provide first and second prizes for all three products. The 9-2's were ecstatic.

Friday went smoothly. All twelve commercials, with a few retakes, were shot during classtime. Neither I nor the class had ever laughed so hard.

Monday came and sixty ninth-graders were clustered around an eighteen-inch television set. They had all been given paper ballots and would see each commercial twice. The study hall students were instructed to vote for the commercial that most made them want to go out and buy the product.

Zit Skin Cleanser provided the closest contest. A clinical-looking student who produced charts showing that green-eyed, left-handed blonde girls used Zit more than any other leading brand was edged out by a group who pleaded with consumers to stop buying Zit or else there wouldn't be any kids with pimples left. Sparkle Toothpaste was won by a group of three boys falling all over a girl who had just brushed with Sparkle. The show stealer was John as Uncle Fruit. He appeared in a pith helmet with bananas in the band and a safari jacket bulging with oranges, apples, and bananas. Uncle Fruit cereal was called "The sweetest cereal in the world. It tastes like a candy bar."

We had certainly experienced the best two weeks of the year. For the first time we were together rather than in opposition. In two weeks we had worked on all four of the language arts: reading magazines and newspapers for advertisements, listening to and evaluating TV commercials, writing scripts, and rehearsing and performing the commercials.

More important, however, was the carry-over. For the rest of the year, the 9-2's were noticeably more interested in English class. While we did nothing as dramatic as the commercials unit, the spring passed pleasantly. No, they didn't start reading Shakespeare in their spare time, but they did become more critical readers by comparing two newspaper reports of the same incident and evaluating inferences. They didn't get excited by creative writing but they did become interested in writing clearly and precisely for effective, accurate communication. Neither did they start watching educational television, but they did begin watching with a critical eye. English, and I hope school, had become meaningful for the 9-2's.

A student-initiated project in filmmaking demonstrated that these slow learners were not slow but bored; they needed a program based on their strengths rather than on their weaknesses.

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CORRECTED VISION OF SLOW LEARNERS' LANGUAGE ABILITIES

Stanley J. Zehm

On a spring morning, when distractions abound for both teachers and students, I had just settled my class of "slow learning" seventh graders into six groups of five students when the principal walked into the classroom. The students, now busily engaged in the creation of riddles they hoped would stump their classmates, were so involved that no one noticed the principal, who did not fail to take note of the students and their noisy activities. After he had concluded the business he had come to see me about, he gestured toward the class and asked me, "Isn't it a bit noisy in this class?"

"Yes," I replied, "Isn't it wonderful?! Real living language!"

Six months before this incident occurred, I too would have been horrified by the noisy class of slow learners. At that time I demanded that my slow learners sit up straight in their desks; I demanded absolute quiet so that I could carry out the necessary tasks of administering spelling tests, reading words-words-words for dictation, and preparing those endless fill-in-the-blanks ditto sheets in grammar, reading comprehension, dictionary skills, and, of course, correct English usage.

My ability to control slow learners was recognized by many people. I was admired by my fellow teachers for being able to keep my students from "climbing the walls." I was given commendations and high evaluations by my principals for my abilities to keep my slow learning sections "task oriented," i.e., quiet. I was even appointed to committees to develop an English curriculum for slow learners in our district.

Fortunately, after three years of uninspiring, counterproductive instruction in English language arts, my myopic vision of the "slow learner" was corrected. No physician, phychiatrist, or ophthalmologist was responsible for the correction of this condition. My new vision was given to me by those same students I had considered incapable of doing anything on their own initiative.

One autumn afternoon, my fifth period class of slow learners entered the classroom just as I was putting away (hiding) some expensive super-8

movie-making equipment. This precious stuff had been used by my previous class of "gifted" seventh graders. The incoming class of slow learners were quick to spot this machinery before I could get it hidden away.

"How come we never get to do fun things like your other class?" they asked. I mumbled some lame excuse to the effect that the equipment was purchased with special state funds for MGM students and was meant for their use alone. The MGM acronym did not hide from my slow learners the cruel reality of the sorting situation. "How come we don't get state funds?" they asked. "We're gifted too!"

On the next day and during the following weeks these students were to prove to me just how gifted they really were. I was more than surprised the next day when four students in this slow learning class each brought in super-8 movie cameras. These enterprising students had also collected dimes and quarters from their classmates and had purchased four rolls of film. "You ain't got any excuse now, Mr. Zehm," they challenged me. "We got our own equipment and now we're ready to make our own movies!"

And ready they were! The oral language they used in class in planning their film was animated, articulate, and very task oriented. Gone were the epithets of derision and defeat, the "dummy," "stupid," "idiot" tags that slow learners commonly hurl at one another. To my astonishment and disbelief, they were actually cooperating with one another. The enthusiasm they generated in writing their movie scripts was an exhilarating dimension never seen in their business letter dry runs and similar writing activities. They had never used their reading skills as intently as they did now when they needed information about filming and editing techniques.

Their final product, a documentary they entitled "When Nobody Cares," may have had flaws, but it gave evidence of originality, sensitivity, and awareness of visual language. The final product, however, was less important than the process these students experienced. They proved that they were neither deprived nor dunces. They worked on their film after school and on Saturdays, involving parents, the school counselor, and the vice-principal. "Success," Emily Dickinson accurately observed, "is counted sweetest by those who ne'er succeed." This fact was likewise known by my students. Their need and desire for success fortunately had not been completely suppressed. The success-oriented approach to language arts we stumbled upon not only began to change my students' vision of themselves for the more positive, it also changed my vision of their abilities and of my role as teacher.

FILMING AN ORIGINAL SOAP OPERA

Robert G. Hagen, Jr.

Students respond well to filmic literature; this group project in creating an original film involved students in developing their own plot structure and selecting and piecing together the best visual content. Robert G. Hagen, Jr., teaches at Ware High School, Ware, Massachusetts.

After spending a week trying to discover how to explore every aspect of an emotion and then record it on film (my idea), my ninth grade students decided that they had a better idea. They wanted to do a spoof with a soap opera format. The logic of this decision is obvious to anyone who has done improvisational drama with high school freshmen: they are naturals at creating and enacting farce. But in addition to a slapstick version, they decided to write an original dramatic script, film it, then use the original script as a basis for the comedy. The two would then be spliced together.

Through a teacher-supervised class discussion we arrived at some common elements of a soap opera and listed them: a doctor, a wife he leaves, a nurse he leaves his wife for, a serious disease, an orphan, a happy ending. Each member of the class was asked to write a plot and include the elements in a logical sequence. The plot was to be a brief outline devoid of literary or technical details. The students were asked to try to envision the plot as a film.

The following Monday there were thirteen scripts. I decided to let the class reason how they would arrive at a final script. I suggested that everyone could contribute what he considered to be the best part of his script and hopefully the material could be meshed into one workable script, or each student could read his script and the class could democratically choose the best one.

To guide the students in evaluating the scripts, I drew up a checklist which considered many of the same things we had covered when discussing books: quality of content, development of characters, setting, and interest. The class decided to have each student read his script, have the other members of the class comment on it, then use the evaluation sheet to score the script in the various categories with a one, three, or five. The script with the highest total would be the original script. I suggested that when considering the plots they frame their suggestions not only from the standpoint of content, but how the plots would look on film.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Set	Story	Camera
bedroom (nurse's office)	A man with only two years of medical school obtains doctor's papers and secures a job as a doctor.	Opening shot of man writing a letter to a friend requesting a fake M.D. diploma to cover his impersonation.
"	His wife leaves him.	Point-of-view shot of wife reading letter while husband is out of room. She becomes upset, packs, leaves. Fade out.
	time lapse	Fade in on time-lapse card "Three months later."
laboratory in hospital (chem lab)	While working, he meets a nurse who works in the laboratory.	Two-shot of doctor and nurse in lab working.
"	They fall in love.	Looks of love. Fade out.
hospital room (nurse's office)	The doctor has never had to do a major operation until one day, a patient he is checking	Fade in to two-shot of doctor giving patient a routine check-up.
"	has a heart attack.	Close-up of patient having heart attack.
"	The doctor becomes worried and fearful.	Close-up of doctor in controlled panic.
hall by main office	he is the only doctor on duty.	Long shot down the hall; cut to medium shot of doctors' schedule on back of clipboard.
hospital room (nurse's office)	The patient begs the doctor to perform the operation. He agrees.	Tracking shot of doctor returning to room. Two-shot of doctor and patient. Dissolve to operating room. Group shot around operating table.
	time lapse	Cut to clock; cut to doctor's face; cut to clock.
hall area	The operation is a success.	Point-of-view shot of doctor walking out of operating room. Nurse in distance.
"	He and the nurse decide to get married.	Two-shot of doctor and nurse. Nurse gives questioning look; doctor smiles.
Justice of Peace's house (outside)	They get married.	Dissolve to Justice of the Peace's house. Three-shot of couple putting on rings.

The transition from printed words to pictures has its problems, and my role at this juncture was to help make students cognizant of this fact.

It was also decided that under the rubric of areas of responsibility were eight categories: sound, costumes, props, sets (including lighting), cameraman, actors, actresses, and a director. Costumes, props, and sets were combined so that the three people responsible for these areas could work together. Since not all the duties would run concurrently, people who had little to do at any point would become extras, take light readings, secure permission to use a certain area for filming, check to see if the locations were suitable for filming, help with props, make signs, etc.

The assignment for the following week was to consider how this basic, raw script could be transformed into a visual story. The week was spent discussing professional scripts and handling cameras—zooming in and out, panning, doing tracking shots, two shots, etc. These technical terms were used only after someone had performed the process; then everyone had the opportunity to try the new trick.

Looking at actual examples of shooting scripts was the next step. The school had copies of *Marty*, which served the purpose well; and Robert Lambert, in his article "See the Movie. Read the Script" in the October 1970 issue of *Media & Methods*, includes excerpts from *The Seventh Seal*, *Easy Rider*, and *The African Queen* as well as a comprehensive "scriptography" of classical and modern filmscripts. Since notes and directions must be committed to paper, these demonstration scripts provided some good points for discussion and cleared up some problems.

Now about three weeks into the unit we were ready to determine the locations and camera directions that would transform the original script into a shooting script. The locations were inserted in the left margin and the camera directions in the right; the final script, with the exception of some director's changes, is shown in the diagram.

Writing the shooting script was the most fun, consumed the most time, and elicited the best comments of any phase of the unit. From then on it was a matter of collecting the props and costumes and rehearsing (a videotape system was used, which not only allowed the actors to view their mistakes but acquainted the cameraman with the capabilities of a camera). The comedy version was written immediately after we had completed writing the dramatic version and before we filmed it. The same original script was used for the comedy, but the personnel changed; so did the locations and so did the concepts of handling the different scenes. The final products were obviously related, but there was nothing like a one-to-one relationship between scenes in the two versions. The comedy was far easier to write and film, and had there been the time or inclination for doing only one film, the comedy would have been the one to do.

A title kit with ceramic letters stuck on the chalkboard served for title and credit frames. The budget didn't allow for much wastage of film, so the editing and splicing processes (Kodak makes an adequate splicer for ten dollars) were relatively simple. We were able to view the film at a cast party during the last week of school.

Mariana Clausen,
Tenafly Middle School,
Tenafly, New Jersey

A FILM UNIT FOR EIGHTH GRADERS

I applied for a grant to be used in developing an eighth grade unit on film viewing and analysis, contrasting literary values in film and the written word.

The resultant four-week unit presented to all my classes (some 110 students) used some twenty-five short films, cartoons, and two feature-length productions. Some were film versions of short stories we studied, like Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" and O. Henry's "The Last Leaf." Others were cartoons like "Unicorn in the Garden" by James Thurber and "The Tell-Tale Heart" by Poe. One of the features was "The Haunting," which was also studied in its original novel form.

Introductory work on filmic terms was kept at a minimum. We skimmed the basics in one or two class periods. From then on, a rather free approach to the films seemed to work, one of exploration rather than dictation. The films were presented without comment, and the follow-up discussions were relatively unstructured. We began by commenting on the more visible, tangible aspects, then progressed sometimes to the thematic bases of the film, the techniques, acting, philosophy, etc. Whatever came up was grist for our mill. In addition to a follow-up discussion on each film, students often wrote opinion papers overnight. Our approach never deteriorated to the "Let's show a film, it takes up time" philosophy.

All the films were shown in the classroom, except for the two features, which were done in the auditorium. The classroom situation turned out to be far preferable for concentration and discussion. The short films fitted into the time schedule for regular classes, which was another factor to be considered. Hopefully high-interest films were chosen. Some missed fire, of course, and were not reordered for the next year.

For its second year, the film study was enlarged to include the whole eighth grade, and next year we hope to embark on a 6–7–8 program encompassing the entire middle school. The films planned will cross subject areas and grade levels for the beginnings of an interdisciplinary approach.

RECONSIDERING WRITING

HOW DOES THE WRITER WRITE?

Few professional writers, let alone students, produce a polished manuscript on the first try. Charles R. Duke describes how he involved students in the process of evaluating and revising working drafts. He is associate professor of English at Plymouth State College, Plymouth, New Hampshire.

Charles R. Duke

I was an "end man" for quite a few years. I drilled on parts of speech, usage, punctuation, and sentence fragments. My students studied and struggled to imitate model passages from the works of Hemingway, Steinbeck, and others. I bemoaned the fact that students were unimaginative, that they plagiarized every chance they got, but I continued to believe the answer lay in more drills, more models, more red ink, and a crackdown on grades. So it went—students angry and bewildered, teacher frustrated and punitive.

It is quite likely that I would still be teaching that way had I not come in contact with an individual who had decided that something had to be done about the teaching of writing in the schools. It was just by accident that the opportunity came. I was teaching in a small high school in New Hampshire at the time. One day an elementary teacher called me aside and asked me if I would like to look at the proofs of a book on the teaching of writing that she had received from a friend. A bit jaded by now after having looked at many writing texts, I hesitated; after a bit of urging, however, I tucked the loose-leaf manuscript into my briefcase and trudged home. That weekend I hauled the manuscript out and began reading. The very first sentence hit me—"How does the writer write?" Simple statement—yes—but one that I had never examined before from the writer's point of view. After all, I was a teacher of writing, not a professional writer. Well, just how does the professional writer write? What is the process that he follows? Do all writers follow the same process? With questions like these floating through my mind, I read on. "Writing is exploration—discovery of meaning, discovery of form—and the writer works back and forth . . . so that he can discover what he has to say and how to say it more efficiently." Come to think of it, there is something to that idea of discovery, I thought. Thus it was that I began my acquaintance with the idea of process in writing, thanks to the work of a professional writer, Donald Murray, in his exciting *A Writer Teaches Writing* (Houghton Mifflin, 1968).

Although one might suspect that this book became my Bible, such was not the case. As Murray points out, no absolute laws exist for writing and no absolute laws exist for teaching it. But what is important and crucial to the success of any teaching of writing is an understanding of the writing process. It is here that the teacher of writing can perform his most valid function, for by helping the student to see the idea of process, the teacher opens a new world of freedom to the student writer and along the way destroys a number of myths that have hampered the student's vision of what writing is all about.

Naturally, one does not discard old tricks overnight. It took me some time to absorb what Murray was suggesting and even longer to become strong enough to accept the fact that the student has to be allowed the freedom and time to work through the process. Gradually, though, my emphasis in class turned from dealing with the end product to dealing with how the writer discovers an idea and then carries it through into written expression. My students and I spent much time finding subjects, looking for the necessary information, searching for the best form of expression to suit the subject; but most of all, we talked about their writing. Now we emphasized working drafts, each a bit more polished than the last, but nevertheless always viewed as working drafts—writing in progress. Nothing was sacred. We had become engaged in the writing process.

To wrench away from using the red pencil was traumatic, but I survived, and my students began to blossom into writers. Gone was the thought that every piece of writing was "done" when it was passed in. Now we took the time to look at each piece of writing as a step in the process of discovering what it was we wanted to say. Students worked on drafts, submitted them for discussion, took them back, revised them, submitted the pieces again. The idea of process became more and more a natural part of their writing activity.

We talked about process a great deal, which led us to new experiences and insights. A local potter came into class and talked with us about how he creates a work in clay; we were amazed to discover the similarities between the process the potter follows and the process a writer uses. We listened as Leonard Bernstein showed us how Beethoven wrote his music (*Leonard Bernstein on Beethoven, Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 67*; Columbia Records). We could hear the various drafts, we could hear the changes, the shaping and developing of the theme. As Bernstein told us, "The man rejected, rewrote, scratched out, tore up, and sometimes altered a passage as many as twenty times . . . a bloody record of a tremendous inner battle." Suddenly, we had a far better grasp of what the writing process was all about.

How does this knowledge of process translate into classroom action? The translation can occur in a number of ways, depending upon the size of the class, the environment, and the interests and abilities of the students. My basic classroom approach is quite open-ended. At the first meeting of the class, I introduce the students to the idea of writing as a process and outline for them what will be happening in the class. In most cases, a student's time in class will be divided among three areas: (1) participation in activities aimed at increasing his consciousness of the writing process; (2) the reading and discussing of writing—both that of his own and of his classmates; and (3) the development of his own manuscripts.

Frequently the student will be actively engaged in working on his own writing during workshop time. Students create their own working environments, some by placing their desks in corners, others by turning their backs to other students, and still others by working in small groups. These workshop periods include short conferences between individual students and the instructor, sometimes lasting only a minute or so, other times taking fifteen minutes. Small group discussions bring together those students experiencing common problems, while others work on their own. Much emphasis is placed upon helping each other, and this includes the teacher, who writes frequently and brings his efforts to class. No grades are assigned to individual first efforts; instead, a student will submit his paper for group discussion and then take it back for a rewrite; other times papers are submitted directly to the teacher for discussion.

It is in this latter case that we find the greatest change. No longer is the teacher reading just for mechanical errors; instead, he is looking for ways to help the student discover more about his subject, to make his voice clearer, to enrich the texture of details. In almost all cases, the teacher will read to find the central problem in a paper; once that is located, he discusses it with the student and begins to suggest possibilities, but only through a question process, not an answer one. "Why do you say that the old man is strange?" "I don't know very much about building a pig pen—can you show me what has to be done?" Such questions begin the necessary dialogue between the student and an audience and make him aware of his responsibility in the writing process. But the important factor here is that the student is not confronted with a thousand problems all at once—something we might have done in the past. Now he tackles one major problem at a time; he works on this and when he has solved it, he moves on to the next. This is just another way of engaging him in the process of writing.

No tests of writing skill are required because every piece that is written offers important information about the individual's progress. If eventually

some form of grading is necessary, the experience can be made a worthwhile one because most writers, at one time or another, wish to receive a definite response from an audience. However, the student is allowed to select what he feels represents his best work up to this point; it is his responsibility and no one else's to determine what he wishes to have evaluated. After he has made his choice, he submits it along with a self-evaluation in which he discusses what he feels his strengths and weaknesses as a writer are. The teacher evaluates these materials in detail and then sits down in conference with the student and discusses the results; plans are made jointly about what the student will continue to work on. Such formal evaluations may occur several times during a semester or only once, depending upon the situation, but teacher and student are in constant communication about the student's writing regardless of how many formal evaluations are held.

Being aware of the writing process does not make writing easier, but it does help the student to bring reason to what he may have viewed as an impossible, even insane, undertaking. We must remember that if we thought that every time we taught a lesson we were going to be graded on it, if every time we opened our mouths we were going to pass or fail, we'd probably stop teaching and stop talking. The same is true of writing. Rarely is a first effort the final product; rarely are we sufficiently attuned to all the aspects of written expression that we can produce a polished manuscript on the first try. Knowing that students are engaged in a process that all writers experience goes a long way toward giving them the confidence they need to look for ways to express themselves in written form and makes the teaching of writing a pleasurable and exciting experience.

William Washington, Jr.,
New York University

PARTICIPATORY TEACHING

The teacher must not ask his students to do anything that he does not do himself. When his students attempt to solve a problem, he attempts the same thing; when they write, he writes; when he evaluates their work, he asks them to evaluate his work. I have seen a class of poorly motivated students take an hour of class time to work on an assignment with some enthusiasm because they saw their instructor's enthusiastic involvement.

Instruction in composition can often inhibit rather than facilitate student writing. Robert G. Kraft identifies teaching practices which may in effect prevent the expression of students' own thoughts and feelings. He teaches at Eastern Michigan University.

HOW TO PARALYZE THE NOVICE WRITER

Robert G. Kraft

In a recent book by Lawrence Thompson called *Robert Frost: The Years of Triumph*, there is a section about Frost's teaching at Amherst College in 1917:

> In his section of the freshman composition course Frost was eager to convey his belief in the Emersonian concept that good writing in either prose or poetry grows out of having something to say. He urged the freshman to write brief compositions based on their own observations and insights, and he expected that the students would relish this freedom to fashion their own descriptions or narrations out of their own experiences. When the boys seemed at a loss to know how to follow these general instructions, he blamed their previous instructors. . . . Frost was also annoyed to discover that so many of these young men who had nothing to say seemed to have no capacity for thinking with any originality and were therefore willing to have their professors do their thinking for them.

Not a whole lot has changed since 1917. Students are still at a loss to know what to do with freedom, and there still isn't much originality from them. And I think Frost is right in putting the blame on us, their teachers.

I once asked my composition students to write about "The Misuses of Language Today." They did it badly. I crossed it off as one more bad assignment without really knowing why it was bad. Later, it occurred to me that I had paralyzed them. I had given them a "theme" to write, on a very specific topic, with a specific title. Many of them did not comprehend what the phrase "misuse of language" meant. They came to me and asked, "What do you want, sir?" One asked if a misuse of language was "like a lie." I said something like, "Well, yes, among other things, but there are other ways of misusing the language without actually lying. Like overstating, which is what protestors do." They looked a little perplexed and went home and wrote badly. Some of them found some canned ideas about what advertisers do, but it was deadly boring stuff. I had it coming. I had given them a subject about which they had no real thought

or feeling. They were asked to write not on their subject but on mine. The logical question was, then: "What do you want, sir?"

We not only give assignments about which students have no thoughts and feelings, but we use such words as "theme," "introduction," "thesis sentence," "conclusion," "comparison-contrast technique." These academic jargon words are alien to most students. How can a student think of doing something fun and exciting if he has to write a "theme," which must systematically develop from a thesis sentence with an introduction, body, and conclusion. And hand in an outline first.

But it's not only the words. It's these very concepts, introduced at the wrong time, that can be deadly. No real writer has ever written with such directions; a writer writes only because he has some ideas which have grown out of his experience. He has strong feelings about that experience and the strength of these feelings is reflected in the expression of his ideas. That's what gives them vitality and impact. Yes, what he writes might also have a nice introduction, some kind of body, and a conclusion. A "theme" it will never be.

It might have those things and it might not. That depends on whether his expression is suited to some nice neat form in the third person. But he might want to start with a piece of dialogue, an anecdote, a personal experience. And there will be no thesis sentence in that. In fact, it may not have any of the things I have taught should be in an introduction. It may not have a clear statement of the problem it intends to deal with. It may say nothing about the scope and limitation of the essay. There may not be any plan of procedure, or any statement of the thesis. The paper might just start in some lively way and might just stop on a quick one-liner.

The point is—and we as students of literature know this—the form of a written piece grows out of some strongly felt ideas. The writer seldom takes a preestablished form or pattern and then pours his ideas into that mold. Someday a student of yours may write a good sonnet, but only if he has given his language long and loving attention. "Themes" are not likely to have been a loving experience for him.

I think I can get away with saying—without knowing how all writers work—that writers in the first act transform their thoughts and feelings into words and pour them on a page. They are giving birth, in a way, to something in them. They're not too concerned yet with how the baby is going to look to the mother-in-law. After it's all out there they can look at it and start to worry about the relatives.

A writer takes a look at what shape has emerged out of his thoughts. He judges whether it might hit the readers better if he rearranges here, cuts this there, and it might occur to him that it better have an introduc-

tion. He might decide that it already ends nicely and doesn't need a conclusion. If somebody asks for an outline, which is unlikely, he might look again and say to himself, "Well, what direction did I find it going in?"

When he is a practiced writer he may find that he is automatically doing all those things at once. He's already thinking about his mother-in-law while still giving birth. He can't help it. And he's sparing himself some work later.

In addition to our intimidating assignments and language, there are other ways we paralyze students. The most paralyzing and toughest issue to deal with is grades. If you give an assignment with all those directions and expectations and then punish students for not doing well, or even tell them that they have nothing special to say, that they are just "average," they may decide "what's the use." All their emotional energy for writing may hiss away on you. Don't take them on the first day to the top of the mountain and ask them to ski down. Even if you don't punish them when they fall, you'll never get them on the slope again. As they go along watching, listening, and practicing, they'll find out what good skiing is and *they'll tell you* just how good they are. Don't fool with grades and other godlike judgments about their work until they're well along, strong, and can take it. At first say only positive things.

And avoid all that academic jargon. Recently I got a piece from a girl about a boyfriend meeting her parents at the door for the first time. The parents are trying to make conversation:

"Do you plan to go to college?"

"Yeah."

"What do you plan to take up?"

"My stereo, TV and blue jeans."

On the way out of the house the boyfriend says, "You know, your parents are cool. I can really talk to them." If I had asked this student to write something with terseness, oppositions, irony, do you think she would have written this? I doubt it.

One final paralyzing force. Be careful about using models. All of those elaborate directions amount to a model, and they're paralyzing. Also deadly are articles with heavy academic writing containing awesome vocabularies. If your writing is heavy and polysyllabic and your vocabulary is awesome, you are deadly as a model. It's always a struggle to keep students from imitating you anyway. But be careful at the early stages even with models of good, lively prose writers. No matter how often you say, "Don't imitate; be yourself," the reaction may be, "I'm sorry, I just can't write like Norman Mailer." The best model is the work of somebody in class who has written something surprising, even though it's personal and homely. To that a student's response is much more likely to

be, "Oh yeah, I can do that." If you can get any student to say that about anything he wants to learn, you're on the way.

Herman A. Estrin, Newark College of Engineering, New Jersey

WRITING SCIENCE BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

What does a surveyor do? Why can you build sandcastles? How are dams built? What happens when you flush the toilet? The answers to these questions are found in a series of children's books written by technical writing students at Newark College of Engineering.

In the engineering writing course, students must learn the importance and the means of reader adaptation. Since civil engineers must write communications to all levels—to executives and supervisors, other engineers, technicians, and the lay public—the students were taught the techniques of audience adaptation. Then the instructor introduced scientific writing geared to children. Initially, his students studied the content, format, vocabulary, and writing style of professionally written children's books. The student-authors focused on such writing techniques as subject-verb-object sentences, parallelism, judicious use of repetition, the use of color, graphic aids, and white space.

In producing their manuscripts, students found themselves answering such questions as: How are bridges built? What is under the street? What makes the water dirty? Some students attacked such complex and intangible subjects as gravity, in "Ouch, Gravity Hurts," and optical illusions, in "Tricks Your Eyes Play on You." Other books told about travel, the solar system, traffic jams, magnets, and pollutants.

Some engineering students felt that elementary school children had no concept of the various branches of engineering and of the duties and the responsibilities of an engineer. For this reason the student-authors wrote guidance books to inform children about the engineering profession and to arouse their interests in becoming engineers. Since the Engineers Council for Professional Development is interested in guidance information, these books were submitted to the Council: "Big Bridges, Little Bridges," "The Engineering Tree," "Eddie Electron," "The Surveyor," and "A Better Way for Garbage." The Council agreed to publish these books because they are specific, concise, attractive, and inspirational. In addition, the Council agreed that these student-authors knew the up-to-date facts about the engineering profession and that their books were not only factual but also sincere and enthusiastic.

SEEING THE LIE

Students interested in creative writing frequently fail to see how their own experiences can be transformed into imaginative artistic works. Marie E. Kelley describes how she developed students' sensitivity to their own worlds. She teaches at Lincoln Northeast High School, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Marie E. Kelley

On the first day of school, students filed into my room for the debut of my two-credit semester course in creative writing. I soon discovered they had one thing in common—they enjoyed writing. Evaluating the works which students submitted at the beginning of the course, I found short stories set in outer space and on ships in the middle of the ocean, with characters and conflicts patterned after grade B television late movies and mysteries. I found poems full of pretty rhyming words put together in regular rhythmical patterns. When I asked these students what experiences they had had to motivate these works, the typical response was, "Nothing really exciting ever happens in my life; I just like to let my imagination run wild."

If my course in creative writing were to result in enjoyable learning experiences for both teacher and students, I needed to revise my plans. I had expected that students would come to me with a wealth of raw material for writing, and I had planned to concentrate on developing their writing technique and style. Now I realized that the course must lead them to respect their own experiences and to transform them into artistic works. Picasso said, "Art is a lie which makes us realize the truth." The first writings of my students demonstrated all too well that they understood the concept "Art is a lie. . . ." But where was the realization of truth?

Searching for a solution to the problem, I discovered William Faulkner's statement that a creative writer must have experience, observation, and imagination. This statement provided a framework for the revision of the creative writing course.

The students needed to value the truths in their experiences before they would feel confident to use them as foundations for their writing. All had experiences; they needed structured learning activities to help them identify and reflect upon these experiences. But identification of these experiences was only the first step; they needed to transform these semi-

nal ideas into creative discourse. Students studied the award-winning writings of students collected in issues of Scholastic's *Literary Cavalcade* magazine and thought about what experiences might have motivated the stories and poems. Students kept daily journals in which they reflected upon the ordinary and sometimes extraordinary happenings in their lives. Because some students clung to their desire to write fantasies and science fiction stories, we viewed the film *The Story of a Writer*, which explores the experiential bases for several of Ray Bradbury's science fiction stories.

As students began to grapple with the experiences they had identified, activities designed to strengthen their observational powers helped them to enrich these experiences. Writing on field trips inside the school building and on the school grounds, students practiced seeing common objects and occurrences from various perspectives. They became aware of details. They closed their eyes as fellow students guided them in concentrated explorations of the worlds of sound, touch, smell, and taste.

As students practiced opening their sensory powers to the world around them, they began to use analogies to develop creative perspectives. They were then ready for learning activities which would help them expand their imaginative powers. A favorite activity was the listing of various uses for common objects. To introduce the activity, I collected common and uncommon objects from my kitchen drawers—a corkscrew, a soft-boiled-egg opener, a plastic juicer, a pastry cutter, a golf tee, and variously shaped lids and dishes. During timed intervals, I stood in the center of the room and held these objects in different positions, and students rapidly recorded uses for them. As students shared their lists, their respect for others' originality deepened. Most of the items stimulated collective lists of between thirty and forty uses. Throughout the remainder of the semester, individual students voluntarily brought items for additional listing activities.

Cross-sensory activities strengthened students' imaginative powers even further. Questions like the following helped students to transform sensory experiences: What color is the wind? What does *green* taste like? Describe the smell of hate. What does a siren feel like? What sound does the color *yellow* make? Similarities between objects and people were brought out as students answered questions like these: Are you more like a hammer or a nail? A rock or a cloud? An ocean or a river? An island or a continent? What fruit or vegetable are you most like?

As the semester progressed, students began to see their experiences from various perspectives, using creative vision to tell "lies" which revealed universal truths. The issue of whether or not the students become published writers is not important. What is important is that they learned new ways of seeing and sensing which may enrich their everyday lives.

One girl, who came from a "low-ability" English class the previous year, demonstrated her deepened vision with the following poem:

Window Pain

I look out my window
and I see everything's changing,
my swing glides gently with the wind
but where is the freckled-faced child
that used to run and laugh,
picking dandelions and chasing
butterfly dreams?

I look out my window
but now I see no further
than a reflection on the glass,
and what seems to be an
imagination looks back at me.
She isn't laughing as I wished
she could, and I see she's
growing up, for the tears, and it
doesn't seem right the way she suffers,
and suddenly I remember . . . it is
only a reflection.

Robert A. Lucking,
University of Nebraska

EVALUATIONS ON CASSETTES

Probably all English teachers have muttered to themselves about the need to talk with students about their writing instead of scrawling unintelligible abbreviations and phrases across their papers. Reading students' papers and recognizing basic problems requires very little time, but writing supportive and directive comments is an extremely tedious job. One alternative is simply to tape-record comments on a cassette tape after reading the paper. In three to five minutes, the teacher can provide more helpful and personal direction than could be written in fifteen minutes. Comments directed to several students can be placed on one cassette, with the appropriate counter numbers marked on the outside. This way, a limited number of tapes is required. A playback unit or two with headphones can then be left in the room for continual and prompt feedback. These tapes also provide other students with a model of writing evaluation, so they can learn to aid one another and examine their own writing effectively. This method allows for a flexible framework of participatory, enjoyable learning guided by a humanistic feedback system. If students can learn parallel parking, they can just as quickly master parallel structures.

Students want to know how their audience genuinely responds to their work, yet are frequently embarrassed by or distrustful of comments made in class. Donnell Hunter, English department coordinator at Ricks College, Rexburg, Idaho, describes a solution to this problem.

THE HONESTY OF ANONYMITY

Donnell Hunter

Two experiences in creative writing classes convinced me that I needed to find a better way to produce honest criticism in class discussions of students' work. The first occurred when I writhed in my chair while Miss Ricks read aloud my short story which floundered around in a mire of self-pity. Even though she tried to compensate for this by next reading my most successful story, and even though she never revealed my identity to the class, I still writhed and I knew she knew who had produced the fiasco. The second experience occurred when, as a teacher, I discussed the best poem I had received in my creative writing class. In spite of an early warning from its author—if you ever read any of my things to the class, I'll just die—after alerting the school nurse I decided to take a chance. It was just too good to ignore. While we discussed the poem, the class first misunderstood it but later caught on, advancing from the rejection of their confusion into the envy of their awe. I watched Linda on the back row suffering as I had once suffered. One student asked me if I had written the poem.

"No, but I wish I had."

Linda slightly brightened at this.

"Then Elton must have written it." Elton, usually our best poet, echoed my response. Linda looked like she would possibly survive, now. Mrs. Mooso said, "I know who wrote it. Linda did. She's the only one who hasn't said anything." At this Linda, though she ought to have been beaming, sheepishly confessed.

I decided that even if the class can't identify the author, the instructor—the only one whose judgment eventually is recorded on the transcript—knows. So the author suffers and the students condition their criticism, knowing that the teacher may attach some personal significance to everything said. If an author should try to defend or clarify his work when he feels he is misunderstood, he all the time must wonder how his teacher is reacting to such overt egotism.

Three years ago I asked my creative writing students to turn in every-

thing anonymously so that not even I would know who wrote what. I would ditto the best for class discussion. Our comments were a bit reserved and self-conscious at first until we discovered how anonymity gave us a chance to criticize without fear of personal offense. We could demolish a defective phrase without destroying a delicate ego. In short, we could be honest without pain. Then we discovered that even if there was pain, the value of honest comment more than compensated for any disappointment we might feel in underachievement. We could speculate symbols, misunderstand accidently or deliberately, question the author's sanity, laugh at or admire, wonder what must possess a person who wrote such things, and still not risk any personal offense. I have never had a class who became so interested in each other's work or who seemed to respect each other's opinions so much. Students could change their pen names as often as they pleased, especially when they felt their cloak of anonymity slipping. This gave the writer not only an audience and access to its honest criticism, but also a challenge to be "published." I became an editor—a calling much more exciting than pointing out a comma splice or dangling participle—instead of proofreader, the role most English teachers feel professionally compelled to assume.

For midterm grades—that administrative evil which, like the poor, seems always to be with us—we had "confession day," and later in private conference each of the young writers and I arrived at a mutually acceptable temporary grade. For a final grade each author resubmitted his ten best items after revising however much he wished. The author was graded by his ability at the end of the course instead of his average ability throughout the course. I brought a few of my own anonymous efforts to class; some fared worse than what some students were writing. I think it's a good experience for a student to find out he can sometimes outdo his teacher and that his teacher takes writing seriously enough himself to be looking for criticism.

Apparently the class was successful. At least the students seemed to enjoy it. I know I enjoyed it. If I don't enjoy a class I can be certain my students don't.

As I reflected on the good experience of that class and made plans for next fall I wondered why I couldn't do the same thing in freshman composition. After all, wasn't all writing basically "creative"? We all start with the same blank page. But my conscience, through long adherence to the ethic that unless we are suffering sufficiently we aren't earning our pay, almost got the better of me. My reflexes had been so long conditioned to red-inking that I wasn't sure I could comfortably ignore mechanical and spelling errors. There is no point marking an anonymous paper when it can't be returned for revision anyway.

Next summer in a night class I began my revolt. With about the same reluctance of our initial discussions in creative writing I got basically the same enthusiastic results at the end. Our approach to grammar and mechanics was not systematic—I couldn't predict just what problems would turn up in a given batch of papers—but I covered just as much material as I had before, and whatever was lost in orderliness of presentation was made up for by the relevance of illustrations coming from what real students actually wanted to write. Again the anonymity gave enough ego protection to stimulate honest, relevant criticism. We used a prose anthology for a supplementary text, but it got in the way more than it helped. Students prefer to spend more time with their peers than with professionals. During the next two semesters I added a few embellishments to my method. Now I publish a little "magazine," *Voices*, "a weekly journal of limited and exclusive circulation to four selected sections of freshman composition." I have used Ken Macrorie's *Telling Writing* as a text for illustrating and suggesting writing topics. I encourage students to buy a handbook and a dictionary for supplementary reference, but most of our study comes from current issues of *Voices*.

I still read as many papers as I read before, some of them several times, but I read with a different enthusiasm. The time I save by not marking papers may be lost in the preparation of *Voices*, but now my efforts seem more meaningful. I work less because I enjoy more. I schedule each student for an individual conference to handle midterm grading and give specific suggestions. At the end of the semester he resubmits his best five papers under his own name, after making whatever revisions he feels appropriate after a semester's study of composition.

Follow-up studies are inconclusive. When I examine the grades of my students who transfer to other teachers for their second semester, I find their grade point average about normal. Their responses to teacher evaluation forms are generally favorable. A colleague once asked me how I could grade such "creativity." Well, I don't think you can teach such a thing, let alone grade it. Just give the student a chance to discover the source of his own creativity—it's there somewhere—then provide the soil of an honest audience for it to flourish in, and stay out of its way while it grows. It will produce some good results.

Paul E. Jackson argues that composition instruction might be improved by the utilization of more substantial subject matter than that which is currently in wide use. He is a member of the English Department of South Dakota State University.

COMPOSITION AND CULTURAL HISTORY

Paul E. Jackson

As with most experiments and innovations in composition, this one was born out of despair and frustration with the small return for the gargantuan effort put into teaching my college composition course. The rhetorical methodology of the traditional cut-and-paste readers was of doubtful value in improving the level of writing proficiency I normally encountered. I did not find that analysis of the various prose styles in the readers had any effect on my students' writing; even worse, the subject matter of the essays was for the most part not very stimulating. The course was an attempt to combine cultural history and composition, but most of my students were unsophisticated and poorly informed about the subject matter areas. This meant that in order for them to understand the material, I had to teach current events, sociology, psychology, and other areas in which I had no special training. The alternatives to the use of the readers were to combine composition with introduction to literature, or to attempt to teach the course with no subject matter text at all. The former was unattractive because of the problems many students have in dealing with literature, the latter because similar experiments reported in *College English*, and practiced by some of my colleagues, showed only marginally successful results.

It seemed to me that a change in subject matter might be one way to approach the problem. My own experience showed me that students wrote best when the writing was based on concrete subject matter. Self-expression, in the form of personal self-discovery or opinions regarding important current issues, was perfunctory, and worse, without purpose. Self-discovery threatened to turn the class into a therapy group but showed no promise of improving student writing. Essays on their opinions about the issues of the day led to fruitless arguments over subjects which none of us were competent to handle and raised complaints from students that they were being graded on their opinions. Except in the cases of a few talented students, the most subjective writing was the worst. I decided that a semester would be well spent in a sustained examination of some kind of subject matter that would expand their limited horizons and

at the same time give me a chance to put my own professional training to good use.

I decided to use the text of *Civilisation*, the successful television series by Kenneth Clark. Here was something the students could use; it was the kind of background they needed in the first place to deal properly with the essays found in their readers. I decided to use audiovisual aids as extensively as possible in order to try to duplicate and expand on Clark's approach.

I was allowed to conduct the experiment in my composition sections the following year. My sections were not distinguished from the others in the course bulletin, thus guaranteeing a representative cross-section of students from different major fields. This was necessary, since the experiment was based on the premise that cultural history could be made interesting to agriculture students as well as English majors.

From the beginning I stressed that the writing would center on Clark's approach to cultural history in order to apply it to discovering a definition of contemporary society and our place in it. The course would in large part be an exercise in what Women's Liberation calls consciousness-raising, and not art appreciation. The art, architecture, music, and literature we studied would be used as data upon which we could build our generalizations about the nature of society. This would relieve them from having to simulate an appreciation for something that many of them regarded as useless, and in some cases, contemptible.

The ideal audiovisual aid would have been the 16mm films of Clark's entire thirteen week series. Unfortunately, this series, distributed by Time-Life Films, costs around $5000, and there were no funds available for its purchase. However, Time-Life also produces a $225 filmstrip set based on Clark's series. It includes a recorded narration, a useful teacher's guide, and good color reproductions of the visual materials used in *Civilisation*. The narrations are condensations of Clark's chapters, running twelve to fifteen minutes in length, with three segments added which extensively survey contemporary art, science, technology, and their relationships to our society. The set is a satisfactory classroom substitute for the films, although in terms of esthetic and emotional impact, it is much less effective. Each filmstrip contains about fifty pictures and therefore goes past very quickly; but since they can be shown manually, I found it effective to play them through once with narration, then return to selected examples for lecture and discussion. Outside reading was limited to a few duplicated short poems which I brought in as examples of some point or idea.

The biggest disadvantage was that the students and I did not share a common body of literature to which I could refer. It is difficult for a

humanist to communicate with supposedly educated people who have never read Shakespeare, Melville, or Hemingway, never listened to Bach or Stravinsky, and are unfamiliar with Rembrandt and Monet. The music and literature which I brought in, as well as the films, were a step toward establishing this vocabulary for them, and I think it was beneficial. At least for a brief time during their sixteen years of education they were being made aware of the existence of an accumulation of usable cultural data.

What kind of subjects did they write about? The following topics are some of those that they responded to best: the nature and appeal of barbarism; contrasts between specific past ages and our own; the relationship between art and religion; the uses of the arts; civilizing and decivilizing aspects of technology; pop culture; and their individual responses to selected works of art.

The final paper, usually close to a thousand words, was a hypothetical last chapter to Clark's book, an evaluation of contemporary American culture, using Clark's method of analysis. These last papers always seemed to me to justify the course. They showed that many students were realizing for the first time the nature of modern institutions and were becoming aware of the lines along which our culture has evolved.

Another indication of the success of the course was the anonymous course evaluation that each student wrote on the last day of the semester. The majority said that they preferred *Civilisation* to our standard text, *The Borzoi Reader*. Most said that they had dreaded taking composition again, but had come to look forward to this particular class. Many said that they appreciated art more and understood their culture better. A few have come to see me during a later semester to report that they now visit our campus art center (most of them had not been inside it until we visited it as a class), or that they had purchased some recorded classical music. Perhaps these seem to be small gains, but how can we measure the enrichment given our lives by knowing one symphony or one good painting?

Their writing improved overall from the beginning of the semester to the end, although the improvement was probably no greater than it had been when I used the reader approach. The greatest improvement was in the quality of the content of their papers; the students were thinking less in the manner of undergraduates, more in the manner of critical and objective observers of society.

Students who were required to respond to their instructor's comments on their writing showed trends toward improvement in their writing skills.

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MARGINALIA AND OTHER FEEDBACK

Edward R. Fagan

That marginalia help our students to improve their writing is an act of faith. But when our students ignore—or even destroy—their returned compositions without so much as a glance at marginal comments, our faith must be shaken. Students' negative behavior toward marginalia has cause: English teachers' uses of the inflammatory red pencil, the caustic insults, the vapid generalizations during the years of required English—all these condition students to ignore our comments.

It was the vision of my freshmen ignoring my suggestions for the improvement of their college compositions which forced me toward a "revision" of my teaching strategies. My first step in this revision was to review professional publications to discover what techniques were being discussed for the teaching of "writing," "composition," "themes," and "essays." Quotes around the words mean that the words were descriptors (that is, topics) to be used in my library search.

Sources used in my search ranged from publications of the National Council of Teachers of English through the latest (4th) edition of the *Encyclopedia of Educational Research* (R. Ebel, ed.) and covered a ten-year time span, 1962–1972. From the Council's *Research in Written Composition* (authored by R. Braddock and L. Schoer) through articles found in *College English*, *College Composition and Communication*, *English Journal*, *Clearing House*, and similar publications, clusters of ideas for teaching student writing surfaced and forced me to reexamine my faith in the effectiveness of marginalia as an aid to writing.

Besides marginalia, other suggestions for the improvement of student writing as gathered from my search included model comparisons, evaluative techniques, tutorial relationships, and graphic logs.

1. Model comparisons, as the words imply, are compositions judged to be "excellent," or *A* grade, or 1 (the best) on a scale ranging from 1 to 7 as in the Scholastic Test of Education Progress (STEP) Essay test. Given such models, our students compare their writing to the exemplars provided, noting such differences as organizational structures, transitions, diction, and similar matters

and, presumably, discovering how to improve their writing.

2. Evaluative techniques employ key questions in a marginalia format (similar to that used by M. B. Ferster in *Programmed Composition*). Students' answers to such key questions presumably give them insights about techniques for the improvement of their writing.
3. Tutorial relationships pair students and/or students and instructors for critique sessions focused on writing. Presumably, the one-to-one relationship provides each student with individual attention so that his or her unique writing problem is solved.
4. Graphic logs require students to record in a notebook their responses to instructors' marginalia. Presumably, requiring students to react to instructors' marginalia insures their attention to instructors' comments. From such student attention the inference is that instructors' marginalia will have a salutary effect on students' writing.

Common to these techniques and marginalia was the process known as feedback, that is, the systematic process of informing students about the effectiveness of their writing.

The revision of teaching strategies for my English 3 (The Writing of Ideas) classes centered on the process of feedback as an integral part of composition critique. To see whether there was an observable improvement in students' writing as a result of the feedback process, two other English 3 instructors agreed to evaluate my students' compositions in a pretest-posttest design. Without going into statistical details (although these are available for interested readers) the essence of the revision was as follows: English 3 students were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups after pretesting with Forms 1A and 1C of the STEP Essay test (posttests were alternate forms of the same test, namely, Forms 1B and 1D). The experimental group had feedback through sound-taped comments; the control group had feedback through the typical marginalia (defined as written comments instructors use to guide students' logic, rhetoric, style, etc.). Later in the study, both groups were also required to keep a graphic log. A side concern of the study was the effect of the difference in time spent by the instructors—sound-taped critique versus graphic marginalia—on the quality of students' writing.

The audiotaped critique used the following procedures: (1) each student was assigned a random number which was his identification for both his compositions and his sections of the tape; (2) instead of marginal comments on the student's paper, sequenced numbers, indicating the order of the comments, and brackets (where suitable) were used; for example, "1" with a bracketed paragraph or sentence would signal to the student that the first taped comments on his or her section of the tape would deal with that particular paragraph or sentence; (3) the instructor would make his

or her comments on the tape, noting all the while the dial numbers used for the comments; for example, the numbers 100–145 listed at the top of a student's paper would inform the student where to find his critique on the reel of tape with numbers from 000–999 run at 3¾ speed; (4) the student was given the following ten inches of tape space (145–155) to make his rebuttal; if a student needed more time for detailed discussion, he could request same; (5) when students used graphic logs in addition to their audiotaped critiques, materials from their section of the tape became the substance for their logged comments.

As anyone familiar with the Hawthorne effect (the effect which leads to improved performance by subjects simply because they know that they are in an experiment) might guess, the experimental group with their taped feedback significantly outperformed their control counterparts, who were responding to typical marginalia. When, however, both groups were required to keep graphic logs (checked by the instructor) in addition to their taped or marginalia feedback, there was no significant difference in WRITING skills between the two groups. But both groups showed trends toward improvement in their writing skills as a result of the required log technique, which necessitated students' involvement with the instructors' suggestions.

Attitudinally (as determined by a questionnaire distributed to English 3 students) the audiotaped feedback technique was preferred by students because, they said, it made critiques of their writing private and personal and allowed them to react to instructors' observations. A correlated finding of this study was that instructors spent approximately one-third less time doing taped critiques than they did with the typical marginalia critique.

If I were to repeat the experiment next year, I would give serious consideration to having each student use his or her own cassette. Cassettes would be even more effective in insuring students' privacy and individualization than were their coded identification numbers and their segmented sections used with the reel tapes.

R. Baird Shuman,
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GETTING TO KNOW YOU: FIRST WEEK ACTIVITIES

The first real need of the teacher is to get to know something about his students. Two exercises which I have commended to my teaching interns have worked quite well as substitutes for the beginning theme and as means for getting students to reveal a bit about themselves, their interests, and their aspirations.

The first exercise, which works particularly well if the students in the class do not know many of their fellow students, is in the form of a questionnaire. Each teacher can devise his own list of between fifteen and twenty-five questions, making them appropriate to the situation in which he is teaching. Among the questions that my interns have used are the following: (1) What would you like to be doing five years from now? (2) What would you like to be doing twenty years from now? (3) If you were not legally bound to be in school, would you be here now? Why or why not? (4) What would you most hate to lose? Why? (5) What would you most like to own? Why? (6) Who in public life do you most admire? (7) What would you most like to change about school? Many of the questions used should encourage extended written answers rather than yes/no answers. Some of the questions should be controversial so that they can provide a basis for future classroom discussions and compositions.

In situations where students know each other fairly well, it can be profitable to have students complete two or more personal characteristic sheets, one concerning themselves and one or more about other people in class. These sheets would list two polarities, and the student would be invited to mark where on the scale he or the person whom he is rating stands. The sheets might look something like this:

Strong ..... Weak
Neat ..... Sloppy
Loud ..... Quiet
Generous ..... Selfish*

Probably ten or twelve sets of polar qualities would make a good beginning. Once the sheets have been filled out and each person has his own ratings and those that others have done about him, he might be asked to write a statement explaining why he rated himself differently in some categories than his classmate(s) rated him.

Students just back from a summer break, finding themselves in an unaccustomed situation, possibly with a new teacher, will find the assignments suggested here easier to complete than a theme assignment, and the exercises suggested can lead directly to written assignments which will capitalize on the students' actual interests.

* This idea has been used very effectively by one of my interns, Thomas Richardson, Pinecrest High School, Southern Pines, North Carolina, who has drawn up a most engaging sheet on which the above is modeled.

CHANGING APPROACHES TO LITERATURE

Learning experiences have a better chance of being "on target" and successful if they begin with the students' ideas. Richard R. Adler, director of teacher training at the University of Montana, outlines a plan for involving students in their own questions about literature.

ANSWERING THE UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Richard R. Adler

A recent trend in the teaching of English is an emphasis in the classroom upon *exploring* literature with students rather than *teaching about* literature. If that is our goal, we must attempt to answer an important question: How can we bring to the surface the student's most natural and honest responses to a literary work?

For too long we have tended to ask students questions, bypassing their questions. Their responses become responses to our questions, not to the work. If we structure the focus for discussion, role playing, or writing, we gamble that their questions and concerns are the same as ours. Not always true! The maturity and sophistication of the teacher as reader is quite different from that of the student as reader. Students must feel that their responses are valid and worthy of exploration. How then do we go about this process?

One strategy which sets the focus while allowing for individual response is a process-oriented method I call "identifying the unanswered question."

As readers, all of us have found gaps in stories wherein we wish the author had supplied us with more information. For example, if we read in a story that a character did something after discussing a situation with a friend, we wonder what the dialogue between them might have included, or how the two persons conducted that dialogue.

Another example might be a story in which the author mentions a childhood experience which affects a character. If the author never tells us what that experience was, we are left to our imaginations to fill in the gap. Consequently, an activity which interests students includes identifying their unanswered questions in a work of literature. When we allow this to happen, we are taking advantage of the uniqueness of each person's reading experiences which guide his responses to the story. Each reader brings to literature a past life of experiences unequaled by anyone else. This past experience is responsible for his view of the world. He sees human experiences in literature and interprets the implications of

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these experiences through his personal view of the world. One of our responsibilities as teachers of English is to help the student clarify as well as shape this new experience for assimilation into his collection of experiences in life. Consequently, by encouraging a personal response from the student, we facilitate this process.

The questions or concerns which students bring out are many and varied. Each student may, if he desires, pursue his own question or combine his question with those of others. Not only does the student sense his individuality in a secure atmosphere, he soon develops a tolerance and understanding for his fellow students, their opinions, and their responses.

An example of this process will show the varied kinds of questions which arise when students are given the freedom to express their individual responses for exploration in the classroom. The following story lends itself to this strategy.

"Read the story and identify the unanswered question which naturally surfaces. Keep in mind the fact that you will be allowed to explore further a possible answer to your unanswered question. If you wish, place a caret (^) in the text of the story to indicate where you would insert the answer you wish to develop."

Echo and Narcissus* *by Katharine Pyle*

Hera became very suspicious whenever Zeus left Mount Olympus

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A recent workshop with teachers of English included an experience with this story. The following list of questions came from the readers:

1. Why didn't Zeus protect Echo from the wrath of Hera?
2. What did Zeus do in the past to make Hera jealous?
3. Why didn't Zeus include Hera in his trips to earth?
4. What activities by the mortals amuse Zeus?
5. How is it that Zeus and Hera are able to roam the world?
6. How come there is only one pool which reflects Narcissus' image? Or is this the first time he looked into a pool of water?
7. What are the reasons that cause Narcissus to love himself when there are so many beautiful nymphs around?
8. What pressures did Zeus use to convince Echo to detain Hera?
9. What was the story Echo told Hera to detain her?
10. How did the gods ascend and descend from on high?
11. What explains the limited powers of the various gods?
12. Why was Narcissus turned into a flower rather than another object?
13. How do you explain the makeup of the tears which could melt a body?
14. Can the concept of an echo be explained any other way than through this story?

These questions serve as options for further exploration, whether for immediate learning experiences or for long-range goals to be spread throughout a unit on mythology. If we are patient with the process we will find that the specific goals we have for students concerning literary terminology, history, authors, and literary concepts can be better achieved by students after they have had a chance to explore their personal responses to literature. For example, if we allowed students to pursue the ninth question, What story did Echo tell Hera to detain her? we would find that students would be better able to cope with such goals as *style* or the literary term *myth*. If they wrote the story which they thought Echo told, they would more than likely try to put that story into the *style* of the existing story. The actual story they produced would be an experience in creating their own literature and would further support a foundation for their understanding the characteristics which define the term *myth*. In one group which explored this question, members actually wrote the story they thought Echo told. After they had finished, they read the story to the group. The first comment which surfaced from the group was another unanswered question in that story. And the process began again from where it originally started.

If we look carefully at all of the questions asked within this story, we can see innumerable possibilities for studying mythology. Several of the

questions contain possibilities for exploring the personalities and powers of the gods. Other questions include implications for fantasy and reader imagination. The structure of the world of the gods is inherent in other questions. The concepts of the *echo* and the *mirror* in our society reveal themselves in two of the questions. Study of the meanings and connotations of words is also possible. By taking advantage of all the possibilities available within the students' questions, we could structure an entire unit on mythology.

Following the questions, students can write individually or cooperatively. They can discuss with another student, or in small groups. Improvisation or role playing can be used. Puppetry, painting, or collages might come into play. The work itself might suggest other forms or structures to be used. Each of the structures allows students to deal with their concern and remain with the text of the story for guidance and assistance in their efforts.

As teachers of English, we very often find ourselves in the position of determining the goals for student learning. We need at our fingertips methods of determining the goal which will afford us the best chance for student involvement and commitment. What better way to begin than with student responses which tell us where they are, what they're thinking, and how far we can expand or extend their learning? Designing and structuring these learning experiences for students somewhat parallels the attitude which Woody Hayes, football coach at Ohio State, has toward the forward pass. Three things can happen: the pass goes incomplete, the pass is intercepted, or the pass is completed; two of the three possibilities are unsuccessful. As teachers, we gamble in a similar way when we structure a learning experience for students. Three things, possibly more, can happen: the experience can bore them; the experience can be too difficult and frustrate them; or the experience can be right on target and be successful. Our odds in this gamble are better if we can find some way to begin with the students' ideas. And the fact that the ideas come from the students makes all the difference. They are more willing to explore *their* concerns even when the teacher decides the classroom organization through which the ideas are to be explored.

ANOTHER DIRECTION: LITERATURE IN REVERSE

Albert C. Yoder

Students will be better prepared to evaluate an author's treatment of a theme if they have first faced the issue themselves and been allowed to respond to it creatively. Albert C. Yoder is head of the Humanities Department, Southside Virginia Community College, Keysville, Virginia.

Despite the manifold schools of literary criticism, in the classroom most instructors approach most works in much the same way. They follow, or have their students follow, a customary series of activities:

1. The students are told to read the work.
2. The class summarizes the plot or outlines the significant action to make certain everyone understands what happens in the work.
3. The class isolates and discusses the central event, the crisis.
4. The class discusses the theme of the work, usually implicit in the central event or crisis.
5. The discussion then concludes with some evaluation of the theme or technique.

Although an instructor may investigate other matters than those listed above, they still provide the general proceeding or *modus operandi* that most instructors will follow. But why should we *always* begin with the work and then move toward comments on the general experience or judgment embodied in the work? Why could we not begin by discussing a general experience or a judgment on experience and then approach the work as exemplifying it?

I would like to suggest a procedure which reorders the steps a class usually follows. Except for the concluding comments which serve to evaluate the story, this procedure completely reverses the usual order:

1. The instructor provides the class with a general judgment or interpretation of experience, which can then be discussed or written about.
2. The instructor provides the class with a situation, event, or observation which exemplifies the judgment.
3. The instructor provides the class with an outline of a story, as yet unread by the class, which has as its theme the judgment previously discussed. The class is then asked to "create" a short story around the judgment and the outline.
4. At this point the class is provided with the professionally written story from which the outline and judgment were drawn.

5. Finally, the class is asked to respond to the story, to respond to it both in terms of the theme they have previously discussed and in terms of technique by comparing their version of the story with the professional product.

The following example could serve as a handout for the study of Sherwood Anderson's "I Want to Know Why."

1. General interpretive judgment. The process of growing up invariably involves disillusionment. Adolescents inevitably become disillusioned about a number of things: parents, the church, personal heroes, girlfriends, boyfriends. Two obvious results of this are (1) that adolescents begin to raise serious questions about why people or institutions are not always what they should be, and (2) that adolescents begin to see reality "as it is"; they lose their illusions and learn to confront the world about them; they learn that appearance and reality are not always identical.

2. Example or situation. When adolescents are growing up they often attach themselves emotionally to a personal idol or hero and inevitably, at some point, they discover that their model is only human, not all that different from themselves. The moment at which the adolescent discovers this can be, for him, quite tragic.

ASSIGNMENT ONE. Compose a response to the judgment or example. Your response may be a narrative in which you simply offer a more specific example or examples of the judgment or it may be an expository analysis in which you express agreement or disagreement and defend your position. Your response may be either personal or impersonal.

3. General outline:
   a. The narrator is describing an event that was important in his adolescence.
   b. The narrator was very enthusiastic about horses and the world of horseracing.
   c. Although the narrator and his friends were accustomed to seeing races in Kentucky, they decided to run away from home and go to the big eastern track at Saratoga.
   d. When they arrived, the narrator was impressed, especially with the qualities of one of the horses.
   e. He was further impressed with the horse's trainer, who represented all that he would like to become.
   f. The narrator's favorite horse finished first in the big race; the narrator wanted to share the victory with the trainer, whom he admired.
   g. The narrator followed the trainer, only to discover that he had gone to a house of ill repute.
   h. The narrator was disillusioned, felt betrayed, and wanted to knew why his idol would behave in this way.

ASSIGNMENT TWO. Write a short story following the outline provided above. You may develop the setting, incidental details, characters, and dialogue in any way you like so long as you do not contradict the general outline.

4. Read Sherwood Anderson's "I Want to Know Why."

ASSIGNMENT THREE. Compose a response to the story. You may relate your general comments or observations in assignment one to the story and or compare your version of the story with Anderson's.

This order of events is the reverse of that typically followed by a class and provides insights into a story not gained with the other. The student approaches the story in much the same way as did the author. An author typically begins with an observation and a judgment on experience and attempts to express these in a narrative. The students are asked to do this as well, even before they confront the professionally written story. As a result, they are better prepared to understand and evaluate the story and are less likely to relate to it passively or be tyrannized either by the author's judgment or by his technique. Students will have actively considered the theme and expressed it narratively themselves and are thus disposed to question the author's treatment of both theme and expression.

Obviously this technique has its limitations. Since the class is, in essence, provided with the theme before they confront the story and thus may not learn to discover and formulate themes for themselves, it would be unwise for an instructor to rely exclusively on this method. He would do better to alternate the usual technique with the one described here; or he might have half the class follow one technique, half the other, and then have them compare their conclusions.

Gulliver's experiences in Brobdingnag will take on greater significance for students when they can see the colossal as well as read about it. Lavonne Mueller teaches at DeKalb High School, DeKalb, Illinois.

SWIFT AND OLDENBURG: SATIRE OF THE COLOSSAL

Lavonne Mueller

I am always looking for the chance to integrate literature with art. For one reason, the adolescent lives in a visual world. Secondly, I want to expose the students to as many artistic expressions as possible. One method I found successful is the teaching of Jonathan Swift's "A Voyage to Brobdingnag" in *Gulliver's Travels* in tandem with the works of the artist Claes Oldenburg.

Brobdingnag, of course, is a land of giants. I believe that students better understand and enjoy the satire of the colossal after they have been exposed to the works of Oldenburg.

On the first day of the unit, I put on the overhead a transparency of Oldenburg's giant icebag. I offer no explanation but simply let the students look at it. Invariably there is laughter (which is the right response). Then the inevitable question: "Is that supposed to be art?"

"Yes," I say. "It's art. Swift uses verbal description to set a scene that literally magnifies a human situation. Oldenburg does the same thing—with a paintbrush."

I then write on the blackboard Swift's comment on Brobdingnag: "Undoubtedly philosophers are in the right when they tell us that nothing is great or little otherwise than by comparison." What, I propose to the students, do Swift and Oldenburg accomplish by their giants?

Then I display a transparency of Oldenburg's enormous ice cream cone. Again, there is laughter. It's all right to laugh, I tell them. But *why* is it funny?

Oldenburg, like many other contemporary artists, is preoccupied with objects. If one takes an object out of the environment and thereby isolates it, that object acquires a special meaning. Oldenburg not only isolates the object but enlarges it so that one can interpret the object from an original perspective.

One can see an ice cream cone any time, I tell students. Yet do we rea-

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Claes Oldenburg, *Giant Icebag*. Orange vinyl and silver fiberglass. Sketch by Sandy Lothson, tenth grade, DeKalb High School.

lize how much of an existence that cone has? How much authority and influence it has on our life style?

I then put on another transparency—this time of Oldenburg's oversized electric fan. Remember, I tell students, the artist is asking us to view his object from a new vantage point. Oldenburg wants to attract more attention to the commonplace by magnifying the dimensions of these

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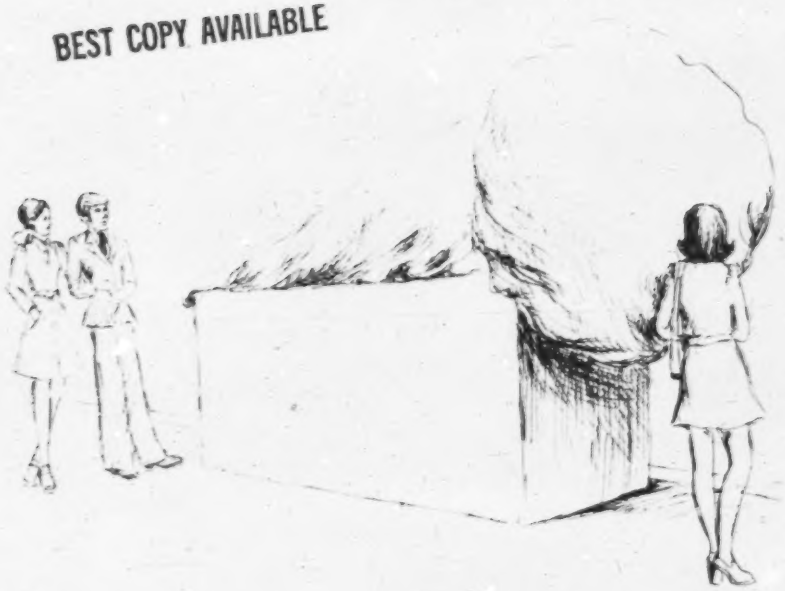

Claes Oldenburg, *Giant Ice Cream Cone*. Nine feet long; canvas stuffed with foam rubber. Sketch by Sandy Lothson, tenth grade, DeKalb High School.

ordinary objects. "I want to make something so big," Oldenburg says, "that nobody can possess it."

As a comparison, I show a transparency with a few of Swift's dimensions in Brobdingnag:

> *Grass twenty feet high!*
> *Corn forty feet high!*
> *A bed eight yards from the floor!*
> *A table three hundred feet square!*

Swift, I explain, also examined objects by isolating and magnifying them. We are asked to ponder on the "twenty foot high grass" and the "three hundred foot square table" as something somehow different and powerful.

Undoubtedly the most dramatic magnification comes from Swift's treatment of people. There is a horrifying yet telling moment when Gulliver sees the skin of the lovely Maids of Honor: "Their skins appeared so coarse and uneven, so variously coloured, when I saw them near, with a mole here and there as broad as a trencher, and hairs hanging from it thicker than packthreads." Swift reminds us again that something or someone is neither beautiful nor ugly except by comparison.

Although Oldenburg is inclined toward objects, he does like to render his interpretations of people through the designing of monuments. The "monumental hero" is supposed to be bigger than life, and that is why Oldenburg is continually drawing sketches for proposed monuments. His monument to Marilyn Monroe, for example, is a giant lipstick with lipstick stroke attached—shaped like a huge, menacing, red scythe.

Swift and Oldenburg are much alike in their massive parodies of human existence. Both artists are intent on letting us know that interpretation of size and scale are basically limited by perceptions of our own size and shape. The satire of the colossal takes on a greater significance for students when they can actually see the magnification as well as read about it.

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THE COURT OF INQUIRY

Many literary works present violent death and leave the reader struggling for explanation. Harvey Starkman, a teacher at Markham District High School, York County, Ontario, describes a dramatic means of considering the most important question: Why?

Harvey Starkman

Like so many of our best experiences in the classroom, the following project was born phoenix-like from the ashes of an unsuccessful attempt to treat the same material through a different format. Having previously taught a novel in a rather conventional Socratic manner, I had definite pedagogical aims when I turned to the second novel on our course of study, William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. First, I was most anxious to employ a technique which would make greater demands on student participation, cutting down on an excessive amount of "teacher talk." Secondly, I was determined to find an approach which would encourage my more silent students to play an active role in the learning process. To these ends I turned almost automatically to the small group seminar.

We do, I hope, learn from our errors. After several seminars it became painfully obvious to me that students do not necessarily feel a high degree of commitment to a project which they themselves have not initiated. Although some of the presentations were perceptive in their analysis, and although some of the students who had been known chiefly for their silence did finally break the sound barrier, the seminars on the whole tended to move mechanically and safely over the traditional ground of thematic and symbolic study. By the end of the presentations both the students and I heaved the kind of sigh of relief that does not bode well for cognitive gain.

Our movement towards a dramatic approach actually grew out of an attempt by one of the seminar groups to summarize plot through role playing rather than through verbal recount. Enough student curiosity was aroused to suggest that an extended dramatic exploration of the novel might be successful if two stumbling blocks were removed: the attitude that only students enrolled in the dramatic arts program could adapt themselves successfully to a dramatic exploration, and the feeling of insecurity that always accompanies a movement from safe to unfamiliar ground. The first block was removed by my bull-headed insistence that *anyone* could explore the dramatic medium by creating a role for himself that he felt he could adequately handle. The second block was re-

moved when we chose a supporting structure to serve as the vehicle for our exploration, a structure which we called the Court of Inquiry.

The Court of Inquiry was more than a fortuitous choice. At present a very popular course in law is taught at our high school, and course work coupled with field trips and a speakers program have created a real interest in legal procedure. Basically, then, my students were working on somewhat familiar ground. Golding's novel, like such other secondary school standards as *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Bless the Beasts and Children*, and *A Separate Peace*, presents violent death and leaves the reader struggling for explanation. The Court of Inquiry, a court "mandated" to determine the underlying causes for the deaths and social collapse that the reader has encountered allows the most important questions—the "why" questions—to be posed, pondered, and argued in dialectic form.

In establishing our special court, all rules of juridical procedure were adapted to our special needs. Our court consisted of a panel of justices who outlined a frame of reference, ruled on the admissibility of evidence, and instructed the jury; three advocates for the prosecution who read a charge based on individual responsibility for the crimes committed and who called and cross-examined witnesses; and three advocates for the defense who argued that in conditions of anxiety and deprivation the irrational aspects of man's personality must perforce emerge, thus denying the concept of individual responsibility.

The selection of roles was a fascinating example of student creativity. There were of course the obvious roles—the survivors, the living protagonists and antagonists of the novel. But how is one to retrieve the vital testimony of those who have not survived? The answer is simple: you call their ghosts. (We decided that unlike other witnesses, ghosts did not have to be sworn in as presumably a Higher Court had or would pass judgment.) In the same way, parents, relatives, and psychiatrists were created to provide insight into a character's behavior. Given a high degree of flexibility students were able to choose for themselves the limit to which they felt they were reasonably and responsibly able to commit themselves to the project. During the course of a four-day program some witnesses appeared on the stand once while others were recalled on several occasions by either the prosecution or the defense. For those who for reasons of their own did not actively seek a role, the jury provided a position of security. The jury weighed all the evidence and returned an oral and a written verdict explaining its decision and recommendations.

The pedagogical gains derived from a dramatic arts approach to novel study are numerous. The Court of Inquiry demands a careful and critical reading of the text to determine viable characterization and motivation for action. The presentation of written statements by the tribunal, the

jury, and the two advocating bodies involves the students in the critical evaluation, selection, and organization of materials and exposes the students to that form of writing commonly called argument. The courtroom presentation itself is an enjoyable experience which provides an excellent opportunity to build on the oral and listening arts aspect of an English program. As the project progressed, both advocates and witnesses were able to recognize and utilize rhetorical technique to lend impact to their statements. Through exposure and experimentation the students became increasingly aware of the impact of those elements of style and presentation which we commonly call "dramatic" on the processes of communication and opinion modification.

The Court of Inquiry project provides opportunity for learning in both large and small group settings. In preparing arguments and in challenging witnesses, both advocating bodies employed the talents of other staff members to help build their cases. One side consulted a physics teacher on the nature of light and the degree of illumination that would be thrown off by a camp fire in order to prove culpability. When a class demonstration was challenged on technical grounds by the other side, the experimenters returned to the physics teacher for fresh ammunition.

Success in any dramatic arts project hinges on flexibility. Rules are made up on the spot to maintain both pace and dramatic movement. In a relaxed atmosphere where exploration and concentration on the process of the activity rather than on a finished product is stressed, student interaction increases as self-consciousness vanishes. In fact, it was not long before my students began to talk about audiences. I did my best to argue against an audience as I did not wish to create a performer-receiver dichotomy in what I regard as an essentially participatory mode of learning. On the other hand, I was not unaware that the students' request was in part a sign of their own pride and commitment to a project that they themselves had shaped and seen through to an end.

Students' frustration and discouragement upon confronting the work of Henry James changed to enthusiasm when they were challenged to defend or reject contradictory statements about one of his novels. Ron Smith is assistant professor of English at Utah State University.

TEACHING CLOSE READING WITH 'THE TURN OF THE SCREW'

Ron Smith

For quite a few years I periodically taught Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* with only the most frustrating of results, both for me and for my students. Regardless how I guided or, as was too often the case, "informed" them, most students staggered under the twin burdens of James's convoluted prose and story. They seemed unable to read well enough to make it through the story at all, let alone with enough care to promote some understanding. The frustrations came to an abrupt halt, however, when I placed the novel squarely at the center of my course "Introduction to the Novel," making it the bastion that when properly stormed by the entire class would yield both immediate satisfactions and the longer range benefits of generally closer and more informed reading by students.

By the time students are scheduled to read *The Turn of the Screw* in the novels course, they have read three novels by other authors and have come to understand that there are definite advantages to approaching novels with knowledge of how point of view can work, of how a novel's shape and content "types" can be detected early for better perception of the author's purpose, of what symbols look like and how they can be employed, and so on. In addition, they have already encountered Henry James through a quotation which I've used in our discussions of the previous novels: "The great question as to a poet or novelist is, How does he feel about life? What, in the last analysis, is his philosophy? . . . This is the most interesting thing their works offer us. Details are interesting in proportion as they contribute to make it clear."

Therefore, the students are better prepared than they otherwise would be when I read to them, before they have begun their reading of *The Turn of the Screw*, what James said about it in his later preface: "It is a piece of ingenuity pure and simple, a cold artistic calculation, an *amusette* to catch those not easily caught (the 'fun' of the capture of the merely

witless being ever so small), the jaded, the disillusioned, the fastidious." Still, when the students hear that, they groan in unison, ready to give up before opening the book.

At this juncture, I tell the students that they will have help in their ruminations over the novel, and I quickly ask them to count from one to ten, around the room, each student thus having a number. Then the class is rearranged in groups. (The size of the class is no special factor; I have worked with ten groups of from three to five each and see no reason why even six in a group will not succeed.)

I explain to the class that each group will have something concerning the novel to defend or reject with evidence. Then I distribute dittoed sheets containing the following list:

1. The ghosts the governess sees are not real, just hallucinations. She is neurotic, "repressed," and the ghosts she sees are quite simply symptoms of her mental condition.
2. How, if the governess is merely seeing things and the ghosts are not real, does she manage to describe so well a man who is dead and whom she'd never seen—Peter Quint?
3. The governess is a naive, scared, Hampshire parson's daughter who *does* battle evil spirits to save the children, who are corrupted.
4. Just how the governess's thinking and actions are to be interpreted is left up to the reader by James.
5. James made some interesting changes from earlier drafts of *The Turn of the Screw* for the final version. He changed things that the governess said, such as "I observed" to "I felt," "I saw" to "I sensed," "I perceived" to "I feel," and so on.
6. Miles' death was brought about by the governess's violently emotional behavior.
7. It is not unlikely that Douglas is Miles and that James wants us to give the matter thought. It is therefore possible that it is Miles himself who reads the story to us (as can be determined in the unnumbered first section of the novel). If Miles did not in fact die, our basis for believing what the governess says throughout the story is jeopardized.
8. Few people who know James's writings well would know of a story or novel of his in which he does not make some serious point.
9. Good and evil all over again. That's what *The Turn of the Screw* is all about.
10. The "darkness of moral evil" is exhibited well in this novel.

The list consists of paraphrases of actual comments made and positions taken by critics of the novel. Each of the ten groups is charged with defending or rejecting, with evidence, the numbered item that corresponds to its group number. It is important, though, once students have read the list, that they be told not to be confined either by their numbered item

or by any other on the sheet. The bumping of heads within groups could well result in another interpretation altogether, perhaps one that is better than any of the ten; after all, the fact that there are some contradictions within the numbered items indicates that not even literary critics are fully in agreement over James's puzzler.

Before dismissing the class I tell the students, as follows, what we will be doing in the three class meetings ahead. They are to have read through Section X (roughly half of the novel) before the next meeting and will be given about half of that meeting to iron out group positions and amass evidence in defense of them. Everyone should, however, be familiar enough with the reading assignment and all the numbered items to be aware how evidence might be used for or against any one item. It is possible, in other words, that defense of a point can also be achieved by being prepared to defeat some other point. One group will be chosen to present its case and supportive evidence at the beginning of the third meeting. The group will be given the floor for no more than eight or ten minutes, after which questions, challenges, or further evidence can be presented by other groups. Since there will not be time for every group to have the floor formally, all groups are encouraged to respond from their seats. Each group will receive a grade based on its performance; the more participation, whether while having the floor or as audience respondents, the better. The grade awarded will be in the nature of *extra* credit, all group grades finally going into the record book as extra credit grades awarded to group members themselves.

At the start of the second meeting, I pass around a sheet which all students sign, by group number, for my use in awarding the extra credit grades. (As the third and fourth class meetings in the sequence begin, I pass this sheet around for initialing. With credit to be awarded to individuals on the basis of their group's performance, this is essential.) Before the groups begin their preparatory discussions as groups, I talk some to the class about the obvious frame device in the novel (hopefully without divulging any clues of importance), the when and where of the story's action, and James's prose (pointing out, to make students feel better about their reading labors, some of the humorous remarks about his style that have been made by people like H. G. Wells). Then I tell the students to get to work establishing their group positions and evidence, letting them know I'm available for any consultation they think might be legitimate under the circumstances. They will have until fifteen minutes before the class period ends to discuss with their groupmates, at which point a spokesman from each group must announce briefly to the rest of the class, with some indication of types of evidence, what the group's position is. This will be helpful to all groups since they will be able to pick up

angles they'd not thought about and be better prepared when the real storming of the bastion begins next meeting. Finally, just before class is dismissed, I tell the students there will be no time to discuss within groups at the start of the next meeting, so they should, before leaving, make arrangements to meet and prepare as groups outside of class after they have completed reading the novel.

At the start of the third meeting, I choose one group from among those numbered one through three to make their case before the class, reminding the others in the class that they are encouraged to participate with relevant comments and evidence as soon as the group on the floor has finished. That group will remain there to field all questions, challenges, or additional evidence that other groups direct at them. Most of the time that means that only two groups have the floor during this third meeting, for the audience's reaction to presentations is seldom less than exuberant, often heated—as might be expected with all the blind alleys James built into *The Turn of the Screw*.

I have found that my participation as audience respondent has much to do with whether the discussions go well and, in particular, with excitement. I've found it best to overcome any impatient tendencies I might have to steer until there is no other way; ordinarily a word from me at the proper time concerning evidence or a point missed will set things straight. Five minutes at the end of the third meeting for summarizing what has been accomplished and pointing out what lies ahead, I've discovered, is the best way to assure that students will rethink any weak positions, perhaps even meet again in groups outside of class, and be ready in our fourth meeting to uncover what is important in James's little "*amusette*."

By the conclusion of the fourth and last meeting devoted to *The Turn of the Screw*, students have discovered that there are times when, to turn Joubert's words around, "The pain of dispute" *does not* "greatly outweigh its uses." In storming James's novel collectively and by disputing the evidence within and among groups, students have gotten as close to a novel as they ever have. In essence, they have become involved, through independent and group appraisal of what they have read, and have come to realize the merit of close reading. Perhaps the soundest proof of that comes in how they perform on a later test, but I prefer to think there's another and better way: I'd rather believe that proof comes more meaningfully when they grow impatient with me when, in discussing one of the novels we read after *The Turn of the Screw*, I've tried to "inform" them of what the novel is all about. That's something like an insult, I guess, to veteran stormers of bastions.

FROM SCRIPT TO ACTION: SUPPLYING THE MISSING ELEMENTS

Robert C. Small, Jr.

Plays are meant to be seen, heard, and acted, but students frequently have difficulty transforming the playscript into believable characters and action. Robert C. Small, Jr., outlines a plan for guiding students' interpretations of playscripts. He is assistant professor of English education at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

Despite the usual success of a "theater" approach to drama in the classroom, many teachers have found that the relative bareness of the typical script, even of the annotated versions found in textbooks, presents students with great problems of understanding and interpretation. Because few plays contain more than rudimentary physical descriptions of the characters, students frequently have difficulty deciding the age, size, dress, etc. of the individuals they are portraying and of the people with whom their characters interact. Settings are also rarely given more than the slightest of descriptions in the typical script. The general setting is usually stated in the simplest terms, mentioning only the most major props and their locations on the stage. Students, consequently, often have little idea of the surroundings of the action and frequently demonstrate very inappropriate ideas about the setting.

Equally confusing to many students are the physical actions and relationships existing among the characters during a play. Where are the people as they talk to each other? Are they standing, leaning, sitting? What is each doing with his arms, hands, face? Certain answers to such questions may be obvious from the dialogue of the play, and some stage directions are usually included. Yet, even in a play like *Our Town*, with its abnormally long directions, students are often confused about the relative positions of the characters and what they are doing as they speak. For many students, a play consists of something akin to a collection of ghostly voices.

In order to deal with these problems, one high school English department developed the following five-stage procedure. First, the students use a comic book as the script for a play and carry out a production in class. There are many comic books available which tell stories of a length not too different from a one-act play. Looked at from a dramatic perspective, such comic books are actually plays with sketches of characters,

settings, actions, etc. Each character's words are given much in the fashion of a play. Pictures of the characters guide the actors and the make-up specialists. Drawings, often from several perspectives, of the various settings of the comic book story serve as the stage designer's sketches and mock-ups of his sets, props, etc. The comic book portrays each character's physical actions and facial expressions and, to a certain extent, helps block out stage positions. Treated as a visual representation of the descriptive material and stage directions absent from most plays, the comic book becomes a valuable aid to the students and the teacher. It is a simple way to overcome the visual problems that inexperienced actors have when dealing with a typical script.

Once several comic book plays have been produced in class and discussed, the next step in this sequence involves the use of a junior novel such as *The Contender* by Robert Lipsyte. The typical junior novel contains a large amount of dialogue and refrains from lengthy descriptions of characters, settings, and actions. The authors of these novels usually work such descriptions into the action of their works rather than stopping to dwell on details. Many junior novels thus lend themselves to treatment as plays. They can be read, studied, and then carried out using the author's descriptions as guides to the characters, the settings, and the action. In the well-written junior novel, enough explanatory material is present to keep the students from floundering; but it is presented in a palatable way. Also, since such novels are usually about adolescents and deal with subjects and problems of importance to teenagers, they make interesting material for class study and production and are relatively easy for students to perform, the dialogue and actions being natural for them.

The third step of this process employs a short story like "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson, which has been adapted as a one-act play. The students first read the play, then the story. Using the story as a guide and working in groups, they develop productions of the play version. After several such productions have been given, they discuss the passages in the story which were useful in providing the descriptive material they needed to carry out the play version. Many one-act plays have been made from short stories, so that there can be several such exercises. An added value of plays like "The Lottery" is that a number have also been made into excellent short films, which can provide an extra dimension to the study of detail and where it comes from in the production of a play.

Conscious now of the kind of detail which is needed to produce a play but which is not overtly supplied by most scripts, the students are ready to deal with a fairly simple one-act play. Assigned a part, each student creates a history and a character and physical description and clears it with the other student-actors. Together, the students appearing in a scene

prepare a description of that scene in writing, drawings, and diagrams. Finally, as they appear in each scene, the actors work out on paper their actions and places on the stage. In the limited context of a one-act play, most students are now ready to deal with the lack of detail and to supply it.

The final step in this process is the classroom production of a three- or five-act play of some difficulty. *Our Town*, *Death of a Salesman*, and *Raisin in the Sun* have been particularly successful because the authors have supplied more than average amounts of descriptive material. Although presenting some production problems, they are not beyond the grasp of students who have been through the steps described above.

Such a step-by-step process helps to overcome the problems which students have when faced with the typical playscript. It takes advantage of most students' natural preference for dramatic involvement as opposed to the more passive nature of the study of other literary forms. It also uses comic books, junior novels, short stories, and one-act plays, which most students like to read. Students who have moved through these five steps are able to meet the script of even a difficult play with analysis and creation not unlike that of the professional actor and director. The seeming bareness of most playscripts thus no longer is an obstacle and no longer results in confusion and vagueness about characters, settings, and the action of a play.

RESPONSE-CENTERED CRITICISM

Jo-Ann M. Sipple and William L. Sipple, Robert Morris College, Pittsburgh, and Waynesburg College, Pennsylvania

In our poetry classes for college freshmen and sophomores, usually nonspecialists in English, the students have grown comfortable with articulating their responses to literature. As we examined short lyric poetry in these classes, students wanted to understand their own affinity for many of the poets' experiences. Some smaller groups undertook the project of discussing a poem of their choice and taping that unplanned discussion. One group studied E. E. Cummings's "pity this busy monster, manunkind." Their response to the poem was honest and personal, while their insight into the metaphors, negative attitudes, and social comments of the poet were precise and sensitive. Furthermore, they were entnusiastically participating in the activity of literary criticism, although we never called it by that name or never studied it formally in class.

CONFESSIONS OF A MODERN MEDIEVALIST

The language, people, and literature of the Middle English period came to life for students when they involved themselves in these absorbing alternatives to the research paper. Nancy M. Cooper is associate professor of English at California State University, San Jose.

Nancy M. Cooper

Experiment at the graduate level? Abandon research papers in favor of creative activities? "Well, why not?" I argued with myself. Each semester, students in Middle English—a demanding subject at its easiest—seemed less willing to exert the discipline necessary to master the early dialects, less able to relate to the medieval writers, and, consequently, less capable of producing a worthwhile final paper. I was determined to find a way to motivate the students, to make Middle English come to life for them so that they would remember the language, the people of the period, and their customs long after closing the textbook for a final time.

But how could one wave the wand of modernity over such an academic course? I took my clue from a very different type of class which I had been teaching with great success for several years. Basically a methods course, it had developed to the point where it was almost entirely student directed, with a major assignment that was not a research paper but a student activity or group project. I had grave concerns about employing such an approach with Middle English but, after pondering the possibilities, I decided that it was worth the attempt.

I admit to feeling somewhat ill at ease when I first walked into the classroom prepared to hand out the syllabus for the revised course. Would the students be scornful of my suggestions and complain that I was insulting their intelligence? Perhaps worse, would they be passive and accepting in class but gleefully pass the word that a once difficult course had gone "Mickey Mouse"? Well, I would have to risk making a fool of myself.

The result? Student reaction was such that I considered myself a fool not to have made the change earlier. Without exception, the students—youthful and mature alike—were enthusiastic about the activities which replaced the research paper. Consequently, they were zealous in their work and the presentations of the finished products to the class were often both entertaining and instructive. I was proud of the entire group. And when the semester was over, I was happy to receive little notes of farewell and thanks from members of the group: "This class has opened up

new worlds for me—I am indeed closer to a world in ancient time." "Thanks very much. I truly learned a lot and enjoyed myself doing it." A year later, one of the students spoke to me again about the pleasure she had derived from the opportunity to use her hands as well as her mind in an academic course.

Herewith is a list of sample activities, with a few comments about the first three in order to give the "feel" of the class.

1. Design and stitch a gonfalon representing some person, institution, or incident in medieval literature or history.

I was amazed to learn that three of my best graduate students were tackling this assignment with gusto. They expressed delight in being able to employ their creative skills in work which was meaningful to them. I was told that when the course was completed, two intended to hang the gonfalons in their homes and one planned to give her banner to a close friend. I knew then that this project would not soon be forgotten. All three students did a thorough job of researching their subject matter (and with more ardor than they would have felt for a traditional paper), as was made clear when they explained their motifs, symbolism, and use of colors and fabrics to their fascinated classmates.

2. Research, cook, and serve a medieval meal.

The project was popular with everyone in my classes! On one occasion, the assignment led to an off-campus party, complete with medieval costumes, music, original poetry, and large menus crafted in the manner of illuminated manuscripts. One of the cooks prepared a chicken aspic dish from a fifteenth century recipe, producing the homemade gelatin base during a week-long ritual of alternately cooking and cooling pigs' feet. The trotters had to be specially ordered from a bemused butcher, and the cook's husband and children assisted in cleaning them and watching the gelatin brew.

3. Invent a simulation game based on the 100 Years War, the Peasants' Revolt, or the Black Death.

This was one of the most successful suggestions, causing students to consider the material in a variety of new ways. In one class, it provided the unique stimulus needed by a student who was at first totally apathetic, frequently absent, and apparently incapable of doing acceptable work. I feared that he would drop out. Suddenly, however, he began visiting my office to discuss the game he was creating about the effects of the Plague. I wasn't sure what to expect on the day he made his presentation, but it was soon apparent that he had become extremely knowledgeable on all

aspects of the Black Death. After giving a spirited talk on the subject, he explained the workings of his game. Quickly his classmates responded, clearing a space in the center of the room and becoming immersed in "Plague." At the end of the session, several people asked for copies of the game directions so that they might play it with friends or family, and all encouraged the author; some suggested that his creation was suitable for commercial production. Immediately after this successful experience, the student began to appear regularly in class, was obviously prepared, and entered forcefully into discussions; he completed the course in a highly satisfactory manner.

Some other activities:

4. Add a chapter to Mandeville's *Travels*.
5. Produce a kinestatic film running four to five minutes on the historical period 1066–1500. (See Charles Braverman's description of how he made "American Time Capsule" in *Film: The Creative Eye*, by David Sohn, pp. 101–103.)
6. "Discover" an "authentic" manuscript of Middle English lyrics.
7. Prepare a multimedia presentation reflecting some aspect of medieval English literature.
8. Complete the unfinished Fitt III of "Wynnere and Wastoure."
9. Research the Morris Dance or Mummers performances and recreate for the class, complete with music, costumes, and dittoed explanatory script.
10. Write a Middle English playlet in which the situations (misunderstandings, humor, etc.) arise from the fact that the characters speak different dialects.
11. Write a fictional biography of the *Pearl* poet, based on inferences drawn from his writings. (This suggestion led to the production of two disarmingly poignant yet humor-laden pieces of creative writing which totally captivated the classroom audience.)

As a result of such assignments, my classes in medieval literature have become more meaningful and memorable for the students . . . and more pleasant and rewarding for their teacher.

Many students have difficulty reading fiction which does not conform to popular conventions in its treatment of plot, narrator, time-frame, or subjective reality. Richard C. Gebhardt, associate professor of English at Findlay College, Findlay, Ohio, describes how he met this challenge.

SOPHISTICATED FICTION AND UNSOPHISTICATED STUDENTS

Richard C. Gebhardt

At all but a few selective institutions, literature teachers find in their classes students who, by their reading abilities, pragmatic orientations, or general lack of cultural sophistication, are ill-prepared to respond to much modern fiction—students whose motivations and prior experiences with literature require that teachers modify their approaches to literary study in order to help the students understand and appreciate modern fiction more fully. These students may resemble the freshman economics major who stated that he had been so confused by the switches from the shot-up B-25 to the naked nurse to the schemes of Milo Minderbinder in the film of *Catch-22* that he literally could not discriminate between flashback, fantasy, and ongoing action. Or they may be more like the senior English major who reacted this way to one of Beckett's novels:

> Reading *Molloy* was a complete waste. The story is as Molloy says of his life: "a joke which still goes on . . . and is there any tense for that?" Substitute *sense* for *tense* and you have an apt comment on the book. Beckett has innovated so much that you cannot see any meaning behind his techniques.

The students of whom I am speaking often have the attitude that a story is an interesting progression of events related by a strong narrator and organized along clear chronological lines; that the inner thoughts of characters must be indicated by such clear marks of reportage as "he thought"; that the external setting of a story is so much more important than its psychic landscape that descriptions of objects simply are assumed to be real rather than parts of a character's fantasies. Innovative twentieth century fiction, however, does not conform to these assumptions about plot, narrator, time-frame, or distinctions between inner and outer "reality." Obvious in Woolf and Joyce, this statement is even clearer today, when many authors seem to share Ronald Sukenick's esthetic: "now no one knows the plot and . . . there's no guarantee as to the authenticity

of the received version. Time is reduced to . . . . the content of a series of discontinuous moments. . . . . Reality is, simply, our experience, and objectivity is, of course, an illusion."*

Students who want to relax as they read a diverting story are likely to be disappointed and irritated as they confront literature that follows this esthetic. The difficult and troublesome form of much contemporary fiction requires a commitment-to-understand, and at the same time it subjects readers to intellectual and emotional assaults which call the wisdom of such commitment into doubt. And since, in addition, such fiction is so alien to the students' assumptions about literature, teachers face real challenges when they attempt to teach sophisticated modern fiction to students I have described as "unsophisticated."

Recently, I attempted to meet these challenges in an upper-level modern fiction course of twenty-five students, almost equally divided between those who were English majors and those who were not. My prior experience told me that I would need to provide an extensive introduction to fictional techniques for some students, and that some of the fiction I planned to teach (e.g., Beckett's *Molloy*, Coover's "The Babysitter," Sukenick's "Momentum," Baraka's "The Alternative") could puzzle and alienate nearly all of the students. And so I decided to organize the course around a theme—*Modern Fiction: Lenses on Life*—that would let me review fictional methods, not as abstract terms but as meaningful parts of the course's main content, and that would help students cope with the intellectual and emotional challenges posed by the innovative use of techniques. For instance, in my syllabus, I told the students:

> This course will focus on the descriptions and comments that a number of twentieth century authors have made on life in this century, and it will study ways that these authors use fictional techniques as lenses through which to project their images of life.

And one of my publicly announced objectives for the course was this:

> By the end of the course, the student will be able to write/speak about how different authors manipulate plot, setting, character, point of view, language, and time to yield different "views" of life.

Besides my public objectives, I had some private ones for the course: to bring unsophisticated students to a point where they could see how deliberate technical alienation and the artistic attempt to reflect absurdity work in fiction; and to get unsophisticated readers to exhibit tolerance, if not actual sympathy and understanding, for deliberately chaotic and alienating contemporary fiction.

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*"*The Death of the Novel" and Other Stories* (New York: Dial Press, 1969), p. 41.

To accomplish my public and private objectives, I adopted a general course organization which would let me emphasize several fictional techniques and which would let the class move gradually toward more innovative and difficult works. The start of each unit brought appropriate background materials and detailed assignments, but, as it was outlined in the syllabus, *Lenses on Life* looked like this:

> UNIT ONE. Weeks 1–2. *Overview: Lenses on Life.* Plot, Setting, Character, Point of View, Language. The "photograph" is composed of these elements which we will study later in more detail. But look for them now in *A Clockwork Orange.*
>
> UNIT TWO. Weeks 2–3. *Plot and Setting: Selecting the Content.* By the materials he selects, the photographer presents an angled vision of life. Short works in *Continental Short Stories,* and *Innovative Fiction:* "Bitter Honeymoon," "The Metamorphosis," "The Wall," "The Guest," "The Hyannis Port Story." Optional Reading: *The Trial.*
>
> UNIT THREE. Weeks 4–6. *Point of View and Character: The Figures in the Picture.* Special lenses allow close-up and even interior studies of the characters who occupy the center of the photograph. *The Immoralist, The Bell Jar.* Short works: "A Day Goes By," "Brains," "My Melancholy Face," "Funes the Memorious," "Robert Kennedy Saved from Drowning," "Mythology: Wonder Woman." Optional Reading: *Notes from Underground.*
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> UNIT FOUR. Weeks 7–10. *Full Innovation: Special Processing.* "Special effects" handling of plot, character, point of view, language, and time yield some of the most innovative and distinctive images. *The Floating Opera, Slaughterhouse-Five.* Short works: "The Babysitter," "The Alternative," "Except for the Sickness I'm Quite Healthy Now," "Momentum," "Views of My Father Weeping." Optional Reading: *To the Lighthouse, Molloy.*

This brief outline reveals several important features of the course. First, to help students conceptualize the way fiction is created, I used a photographic analogy in which plot and setting formed the background; characterization placed figures against this background; point of view allowed various kinds of portrait study; and innovative handling of point of view, language, and time were the special effects created during processing. While simplistic, this structure did provide a way for students to relate fictional techniques to each other and to their previous experiences with film and television.

Within this framework, I was able to provide necessary information about technique for the students who most needed it without boring the others, most of whom actually need some review work. And the conceptual framework also helped all of the students understand that, besides being a finished product to be enjoyed, fiction is the result of a deliberate creative process. Individually, several students admitted that the tech-

nique-as-lens approach helped them understand definitions they had memorized in an earlier introductory course. And all of the students, in an anonymous course appraisal, reported that the organization of the course around technique and innovation made clear contributions to their learning.

A second feature that the outline reveals is the fact that the course required a lot of reading. My approach was to read more works, to spend less time on each one, and to use rather specific reading report forms to guide student reading and prepare students for more productive discussions. Here, for example, are two of four questions on Vonnegut's "The Hyannis Port Story": (1) Locate the major events of this story. Look for switches in location, time, and characters as keys to when one event ends and another begins. (2) Now pick one major event and break it down into the smaller events that make it up.

Such guidance guaranteed close, detailed reading, and it facilitated discussion that was spirited, thorough, and quite analytic. But having provided the guidance to generate such discussion, I did not try to force every nuance of meaning from each work, nor did I seek to analyze each work from every possible angle of attack. Students appreciated the approach, according to conversations and anonymous course evaluations. While some commented on the quantity of reading, others were glad to have read the works and generally were unable to suggest items that they would have omitted.

A third characteristic suggested by the outline is that some students chose to get broader experience by reading a number of challenging works in addition to the basic reading. Motivated by individual interests, the class divided itself almost equally into two subgroups (and not simply along lines of their majors)—a neat division that allowed us to use the middle of each week for smaller discussion groups while reserving each Monday and each Friday for background presentations and general discussions. Without exception, students responded on the course appraisal that having the small groups and the chance to choose whether or not to read four optional novels had contributed positively toward their learning in the course.

The fourth and most important feature suggested by the outline is the way the course emphasized *sequence:* from the more traditional handling of plot, character, and point of view in *A Clockwork Orange* and stories by Camus and Sartre; through the greater experimentation of Kafka, Woolf, Böll, and Barth; and into the highly untraditional fiction of *Molloy*, "The Babysitter," and "Momentum." This sequencing effected a transition from the kind of fiction with which the students initially felt comfortable to the challenging, disturbing writing characteristic of much

innovative contemporary fiction. Students' response late in the course to such thoroughly difficult works as those by Beckett, Coover, Sukenick, and Baraka made it clear that the transition had worked successfully. There was rather wide agreement, for instance, that the last work, Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, was a pretty easy book compared with "The Babysitter" or "The Alternative." And, reporting anonymously, all but one student indicated greater capacity to read and understand such fiction by the end of the term.

Paul A. Eschholz and Alfred F. Rosa, University of Vermont

THE LIVELINESS OF LANGUAGE HISTORY

Students should know that humans are symbol-making creatures and that their use of symbols is one of their greatest achievements. It is important for students to realize that their language is like the air they breathe; it is necessary and inescapable, and when it changes so do they. Students must realize that language and culture are inextricably intertwined and that they influence and shape one another. It is also important for students to appreciate that language is dynamic and that it changes because people change. Although we continue to do basically the same things we have always done, we do not do them in quite the same ways with quite the same objects. Not only do new things need new names but the names of old things are constantly changing. The changes that have occurred in English since the days of Beowulf have been a function of the very progress of mankind. Language is continually at play with the forces which operate upon it. It reaches out and attaches itself to these new forces; it reflects and feeds upon itself, reconstructs, and reaches out anew; and these changes are more clearly obvious over a number of years or even centuries. What the study of language can do for students is to make this play, this organicism, visible and representative of the liveliness of the language as a whole.

AN ECLECTIC ENTROPY ENCOUNTER

Joseph O. Milner describes how he involved students in something more than an intellectual encounter with the chaotic world perceived by twentieth century artists. He teaches in the Department of English, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Joseph O. Milner

In the past three years I have taught courses in contemporary literature and in art and literature of the twentieth century. Both courses were in their initial year rather successful, but I sensed that in each course the radical departures of twentieth century thought were for students essentially just matters of discussion rather than insights which penetrated deep into their psyches. We had rather fully entertained the notions of entropy and indeterminacy, the chaos and uncertainty which had replaced the more comfortable absolutes of the past, but a total confrontation (mind, body, emotion) with that troubled world which the twentieth century artist perceived was never really achieved. I knew then that I needed to jar the classes loose from some of their basic assumptions about their world. Almost immediately it became clear to me that it would take a less verbal, less "intellectual" approach to do that unleashing. So, I began to develop a more experiential approach to the same goals: a learning structure designed to allow students to have chaos brought to their order and then order etched onto their chaos.

The first stage in this encounter with entropy involved the presentation of a rather direct statement about the chaotic nature of our world. Almost any physicist of the Copenhagen school could have been chosen as a spokesman, but I particularly liked the statement of P. W. Bridgman:

> . . . The revolution that now confronts us arises from the recent discovery of new facts, the only interpretation of which is that our conviction that nature is understandable and subject to law arose from the narrowness of our horizons, and that if we sufficiently extend our range we shall find that nature is intrinsically and in its elements neither understandable nor subject to law. . . . The physicist thus finds himself in a world from which the bottom has dropped clean out; as he penetrates deeper and deeper it eludes him and fades away by the highly unsportsmanlike device of just becoming meaningless.

Each member of the class was given a copy of Bridgman's statement so that he could take part in the creation of chance by randomly selecting any five words from the passage and reading each of them aloud at the

appropriate time during my rather liturgical reading of Bridgman's words. Bridgman's message was somewhat startling in itself, and the ritualistic and random dimensions of its reading clearly reiterated the notion of chaos. In order to make Bridgman's message sink deeper and to gain further student involvement in these ideas, I asked each student to try to capture very succinctly in writing his reaction to this kind of world. These reactions were then discussed briefly, but they could have just been left to boil, for their importance was in encouraging individual responses to the ideas.

Having gained some reaction, then, and having presented a statement directly confronting the notion of an orderly world, we entered the second stage of our encounter with entropy. At this point students were asked to read Andre Dubus's short story "The Doctor" with these new insights at the forefront of their minds (other literature which shows man confronted by a world which no longer has the order he once supposed could have been used). After they finished reading the story (about ten minutes) we moved into the story in an inductive manner by asking why the central character, Art Castagnetto, put the hose in the car trunk, what kind of promise that solution held, and what that had to say about the worth of his world view. In this step I hoped to get the class to feel that there is a world of chance and random activity in which man operates and that Dubus sees Art's painstaking preparations as doomed to futility.

Having perhaps shaken some of the full certainty of the students' assumptions about an orderly world, I moved quickly to let them understand their roles as "Seers" (as Walker Gibson so aptly put it) in recomposing the world. Here again I used literature, but in this instance the finely ordered work of Katherine Mansfield's "Miss Brill." This time, though, they were not asked to read it individually, but were asked to read two- or three-line segments of Mansfield's whole tale in an entirely random order. I had literally cut the story into twenty to thirty parts intelligible in themselves but not long enough to develop much context. Students drew these out of a hat and were led in a randomly directed reading of their individual parts in a necessarily nonsequential rendering of the tale. The class was then asked what they could make of it, could they discover a beginning, middle, and end, did they have a sense of the whole story. As they began to feel more confident about the tale (and they were very quick to do this) I asked what was happening to the tale, how it was gaining its order, how they liked their own rendering of the tale in comparison to the more straightforward means of communicating it. At that point I went on to tell them that much of contemporary literature, art, and music is built on this very concept of the audience's acting on the work, participating rather than just absorbing a prepackaged form.

With this said we moved to a final experience which allowed individuals to fashion the meaninglessness of random group activity into an intelligible order. In this exercise each member of the class was given a simple activity: singing the first four bars of "The Star Spangled Banner"; standing every twelve seconds to shout, "My, God, the air is streaming in on us"; clapping one's hands over one's ears every six seconds and saying in pain, "I've heard enough about Watergate"; moving around the room caressing the left ankle of every person available; writing on a chalkboard $E=MC^2$ every time you hear the word "Watergate"; assuming a fetal position in the corner of the room for the full exercise; erasing the board every time anything appears. In addition, two students were asked to sit with ears shut and two with eyes closed. These activities were designed to hold little meaning outside an appropriate context, some to be wholly independent of other actions in the room, some to be keyed to other activities. The class was urged to forget their own worlds and to act out their instructions with as much bravado and elan as they could possibly arouse in themselves. After the exercise had run its course (four or five minutes), time was called and the class's reactions were solicited, initially from those who had eyes or ears shut. Here, as with the Mansfield story, many students reported that they felt certain activities were somehow related (gained meaning from each other) and that the whole activity began to take on an aura of togetherness with which they became increasingly more in tune and more comfortable. And, even more so than with the Mansfield tale, there came to be a class feeling that their minds had ordered chaos into something which could almost be seen as order. Such, they were reminded, is the process of the mind in all of its daily activities. As a final reinforcement of the contemporary artist's preoccupation with the problem of order, I read Kurt Vonnegut's statement from *The Breakfast of Champions*, "Let others bring order to chaos. I would bring chaos to order."

I have tried this more experiential introduction to these two courses for the past two years and was asked to use it in an experimental summer program for gifted high school students. In all of these cases I found it was extremely effective as a ground for the class's future probes into contemporary literary expression. I could sense that these students had absorbed a real sympathy for this contemporary world view. At the same time I could feel the benefit of such a holistic experience in breaking down barriers between students and in fostering more comfortable relations between them early in the course. In every respect this change, brought on by my reflection on the earlier classes' lack of both feeling and understanding, has made these courses far richer and far more exciting for all of us.

Students had more freedom of choice in their outside reading and remembered more of what they read when they were tested orally rather than required to write research papers. Norman Nathan teaches at Florida Atlantic University.

INDIVIDUAL ORAL EXAMS ON OUTSIDE READING

Norman Nathan

When I began to teach Shakespeare on a quarter instead of a semester system, my problem with term papers became oppressive. No longer could I give my students eleven weeks to produce a paper and myself four weeks for grading and comments (with some little time for an obviously bad paper to be rewritten). Now I could allow but seven weeks for the conception, research, and writing of the paper, while I would have only three weeks for my part of the assignment.

Could there be a substitute of at least equal value? Since there is a final written exam as well as a midterm, my students are given opportunities to express themselves in writing; and research papers are required in seminar courses, so there is no shortage of experience in that direction. What the student in a large class does lack, however, is contact with the teacher. Therefore, I decided to require each student to prepare himself for an individual oral examination on his outside readings. His knowledge of Shakespeare's plays would be covered by the usual written examination.

At the first meeting of the quarter, I tell my students that each one will have an exam outside of class that will last from fifteen to twenty minutes. He is to prepare himself for this by reading any variety of material that is relevant to an understanding of Shakespeare and his era. No specific book, chapter, or article is assigned, though I do hand out a sample bibliography to indicate the type of diversity that is his to choose. I stress that he need not read even one item on my list. He is expected to make his own choice based on what he prefers to read. I point out that with hundreds of relevant books and thousands of articles available in a college library, he should find many items of interest to him. Should he pick up something and find it dull, I suggest that he give himself credit for the few pages read (this will appear on a bibliography he is to bring with him when he takes his oral exam) and proceed to another item.

The one thing prohibited is to read within a narrow range. "You are

not being asked to do research for a term paper to be delivered orally," I tell the class. One student might prefer something on Shakespeare's life, a chapter or two on Elizabethan England, a few articles on two or three plays, and parts of a book on witchcraft in Shakespeare. Another may consider Shakespeare's use of the Bible, Elizabethan dress, chapters on how the plays were presented, an article on a minor point in *Julius Caesar*, and a slim book on Shakespeare's audience. I suggest that the student choose his readings as if he himself were expected to teach a few plays. He should obtain whatever types of background knowledge that he feels he would like to have.

When the student comes for his oral, he is permitted a carbon copy of the bibliography he hands me, but no notes. His grade will be determined largely on the following factors, the first two being stressed:

1. How well he knows what he has read.
2. How much he has read.
3. His reasons for making his particular selection.
4. The quality of his oral presentation.

Types of questions I ask, varying them so that no one pattern develops, include: What was the least (most) interesting item you read? Which writer seems to you to be the most (least) scholarly and best supports his statements? Comment on the author's style of writing. Did you find any disagreement among the items you've read? Any overlapping of information? Why did you (did you not) find this assignment of value? Which did you prefer, the articles or the parts of books that you read? How did your reading supplement what we're doing in class?

These are, of course, general questions. I begin this way to put the student at ease. He can answer a generality if he has done any work at all. His answers, however, lead me to specifics in areas where he himself claims knowledge—and the A's, B's, and C's (and an infrequent D and F) emerge.

Since I am not looking for "right" answers, my not having read any item presents no significant problem. Is the answer reasonable, convincing, supported? After a little experience is acquired with this type of exam, it is difficult to make a student believe that you haven't read everything on his list!

Students invariably inquire as to "how many pages?" While I refuse to be trapped into a precise number (placing a premium on large print, duodecimos, and well-illustrated books) I mention that few students who read under 300 pages are likely to pass. I recall, however, that I gave an A to a student who read but 350 pages and showed great knowledge of her diverse readings, and that a student who "read" 1700 pages received a barely deserved C.

There are many advantages to this type of exam. Not only is each student treated as an individual, he has far more independence of choice in his reading than if he were to choose a topic for a term paper. Also, the project saves me time. While I can correct only two research papers an hour, I can average three students an hour on an oral exam that is far more pleasant (to me!) than reading papers. And there are no rewrites.

Most important is the value to the students. Final exams reveal that the background reading has helped the student answer questions on the plays. Also, what he remembers from the course will be greatly increased by his having read items of his choice. Former students, now teachers themselves, have told me that the assignment was of great help to them in presenting Shakespeare in their own classrooms. And while perhaps half of the students are nervous when they arrive, most are pleasantly surprised to find that they have earned a good grade. As a matter of fact, grades here are somewhat higher than for written exams, for few dare to face you without having put in a real effort. Apparently they sense that bluffing will be quickly revealed in an oral exam.

The only disadvantage I have found is that working students have difficulty coming for the oral at a convenient time. But I can afford to inconvenience myself—which I would have to do in any event if I marked term papers. Clearly, secondary school classes would have more trouble arranging times for the orals than a college class.

All in all, I suggest an oral exam on outside readings of the student's own selection as a pleasant, effective, more nearly democratic, and more memorable type of project.